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Familiar horror in Florida



■ Teenager who had been expelled from school with 17 counts of murder after latest US school shooting

■ Students say suspect harassed peers, bragged about gun

■ Football coach who shielded students among victims

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Maria Evellard, 14, cries as she hugs a friend Thursday before the start of a vigil at Parkland Baptist Church for the victims of Wednesday's shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

GERALD HERBERT/AP

New Pentagon policy: Be deployable in 12 months, or you're out

By DIANNA CAHN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Facing enormous demand around the globe and a slump in military retention, the Pentagon on Wednesday introduced a new policy that will require servicemembers to be deployable within 12 months or be forced out of the armed services.

"On any given day, about 13 to 14 percent of the force is medically unable to deploy — that comes out to be around 286,000" servicemembers, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert Wilkie told a Senate panel Wednesday.

"The situation we face today is really unlike anything we have faced — certainly in the post-World War II era," Wilkie said. "We have to ensure, given the climate this country faces, that everyone

who signs up can be deployed anywhere in the world."

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee's subcommittee on personnel and family readiness, Wilkie described the policy as an effort to bolster military retention.

SEE POLICY ON PAGE 9



MILITARY

Navy relieves 3 after officer found drunk, naked

By SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

The leadership triad of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 was relieved of duty after the executive officer was found wandering drunk and naked through the woods at Camp Shields on Okinawa, Japan.

Lt. Cmdr. Jason Gabbard was discovered intoxicated and unclothed in a wooded area late last Thursday. Navy officials said Thursday.

Cmdr. James Cho and Command Master Chief Petty Officer Jason Holden were relieved for mishandling the incident, the

Navy added.

Cho and Holden tried to cover up the incident, an official told Navy Times.

"Trust is the foundation for everything we do as military professionals, and we expect our servicemembers to conduct themselves with the integrity and character to justify that trust," said Cmdr. Cate Cook, spokeswoman for the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, in a statement.

"Our senior leaders are entrusted to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times."

Gabbard, Cho and Holden have



Lt. Cmdr. Jason Gabbard

been temporarily reassigned to Naval Construction Group 1 in Port Hueneme, Calif.



Cmdr. James Cho

Capt. Nick Yamodis will assume temporary command of the Seabee battalion, which is deployed



Command Master Chief Petty Officer Jason Holden

to Japan from Port Hueneme.

wyland.scott@stripes.com
Twitter: @wylandstripes

Budget director: Trump's military parade could cost as much as \$30M

By DAVID S. CLOUD
Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's proposal to hold a large-scale military parade in Washington, with marching soldiers and rows of tanks and armored vehicles, could cost as much as \$30 million, according to Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney.

The cost would depend on how many troops are involved and the types of military equipment chosen, Mulvaney told the House Budget Committee.

"I've seen various different costs estimates of between \$10 million and \$30 million, depending on the size of the parade, the scope of it, the length of it, those kind of things," Mulvaney said.

Pentagon officials have said they are preparing options in a response to a request from Trump for a military parade to showcase America's armed forces and military might, similar to the annual French Bastille Day parade that he attended in July

in Paris.

The Pentagon last staged a parade in Washington in 1991 to celebrate victory in the first Persian Gulf War, which saw a vast U.S.-led military coalition push Iraqi troops out of Kuwait.

More than 8,000 troops marched down Constitution Avenue as stealth fighter planes soared overhead and tanks and Patriot missile batteries rolled past an estimated 200,000 people. The event was reported to cost \$12 million.

Officials are reportedly considering staging Trump's parade on Veterans Day, which is on Nov. 11.

The proposed federal budget released this week did not include money for the parade, so the White House presumably would have to seek funding from Congress.

"We'd have to appropriate funds for it; we'd have to find funds for it," Mulvaney told Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif. "We've not done much research on it."

Russia says US strike in Syria may have killed 5 of its citizens

Associated Press

MOSCOW — After a week of swirling controversy, Russia acknowledged on Thursday that five of its citizens may have been killed by a U.S. strike in Syria, the first time Russians have died at U.S. hands in Syria.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova emphasized that the five victims weren't Russian servicemen.

"According to preliminary information, five people, presumably Russian citizens, may have been killed in combat, the circumstances of which are being clarified," Zakharova said in a briefing. "Some others have been injured, and it's still necessary to check whether they are citizens of Russia or other nations."

Until Thursday, both Russian and U.S. officials said they had no information on Russian casualties in the Feb. 7 clash, which came when pro-Syrian government forces attacked positions of the U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters in the oil-rich eastern province of Deir el-Zour and faced a ferocious U.S. counterattack.

Zakharova wouldn't describe how the Russians died, saying the circumstances of the clash are still being clarified, but her statement amounted to official recognition that the victims were part of the force that advanced on positions of the U.S.-backed fighters. It marks the first time Russian and U.S. combatants have become directly engaged in combat in Syria.

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MILITARY

Mattis urges boost in spending, troops from NATO allies

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis urged allies to boost their defense spending while also seeking more commitments for the war in Afghanistan, where NATO remains short on pledges for more troop contributions.

"In Afghanistan, we are committed to filling critical shortfalls in our staff there," Mattis said during a news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Thursday.

So far, about 12 nations have committed to boosting troop numbers, but "more work needs to be done," said Mattis, who stopped short of saying how many vacancies remain.

In November, NATO agreed to boost force numbers in Afghanistan in 2018 to expand its Resolute Support mission from 13,000 to 16,000 troops. The alliance's goal is that roughly half the increase will be manned by U.S. allies and partners.

However, allies in Europe have struggled to meet the U.S. halfway. In recent months, diplomats in Brussels have said 700 more troops is a more realistic number.

For the U.S., the push for more from NATO members extends beyond just the mission in Afghanistan.

Defense spending levels among allies was on the agenda during two days of talks in Brussels. Mattis credited members for improving last year, which marked the largest collective increase in allied defense spending in 25 years, he said.

Still, only 15 of NATO's 29

members are on track to reach the benchmark of dedicating 2 percent of gross domestic product to military matters by 2024.

Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, has not laid out a clear plan for reaching NATO spending guidelines.

Mattis said he remains optimistic that Berlin will not renege on its obligations.

"I am confident that Germany will continue to move up in terms of its defense spending at a pace we all hope is matching the strong economy it has," he said.

After talks ended Thursday, Mattis was bound for Stuttgart, Germany, to meet with officials at U.S. European Command.

During his tour of Europe, which included an earlier stop in Rome, the conflict in Syria and tensions with Turkey also were discussed.

Ankara has lashed out repeatedly at the U.S. in recent weeks for backing Kurdish fighters in Syria who have been a key U.S. partner in the fight against Islamic State. Turkey views the Kurds as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which it regards as a terrorist group.

Some of Turkey's top political leaders have even suggested that U.S. forces partnered with the Kurds in northern Syria could be targeted by the Turkish military. Mattis said he has been talking with his Turkish counterparts while in Europe and that some progress has been made. But he acknowledged "there are areas of uncommon ground."

"War gives bad alternatives to choose from," Mattis said.

vandiver.john@starsandstripes.com
Twitter: @john_vandiver

US, Japan, Australia kick off Guam drills

By LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

More than 100 warplanes will fly over Guam this month during an annual exercise that tests the air power of the U.S. and its allies in the western Pacific.

Cope North, which kicked off Wednesday at Andersen Air Force Base, involves 2,850 troops and planes from the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and the Royal Australian Air Force, a Defense Department statement said.

The exercise, which runs through March 2, will include humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief training and aerial and force employment events designed to increase readiness, an Air Force statement said.

Cope North — originally a

quarterly exercise between the U.S. and Japanese air forces in Misawa, Japan — was moved to Guam in 1999.

The now-annual exercise is a key drill promoting stability and security throughout the Indo-Pacific region, the Air Force said.

Andersen hosts the U.S. "continuous bomber presence" mission in the region.

In recent years, the role was filled via six-month deployments by B-1B Lancers, which frequently flew over the Korean Peninsula in shows of force after provocations from North Korea. Last month, the Lancers were replaced by B-52 Stratofortresses and B-2 Spirit-capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

cook.leon@starsandstripes.com
Twitter: @LeonCook12



Joe GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

From left, Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville, Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Stephen W. Wilson, Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. William F. Moran and Marine Corps Assistant Commandant Gen. Glenn M. Walters talk Thursday before a Senate Armed Services subcommittee hearing on the current readiness of U.S. forces.

Leaders: Budget instability puts readiness push at risk

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Military leaders told a panel of senators Wednesday that they've made significant strides addressing a readiness crisis in the past year but plenty of work remains as the military awaits stable funding. Stopgap budget measures have wreaked havoc, they warned during a Senate Armed Services Committee subcommittee hearing, and progress could falter if lawmakers don't follow through on their spending plans.

"For a while there, we weren't getting the appropriate funding to properly maintain our units at the proper level," said Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville. "It needs to sustain because we need to fill in the holes in readiness that we let develop over the last couple of years when we weren't getting the timely, predictable and sustained funding we needed."

The military leaders testified Wednesday before the subcommittee on readiness and management to address readiness of U.S. forces. About a year ago, a similar hearing drew deep concerns as leaders said efforts were woefully behind.

Subsequent funding for the 2017 fiscal year "provided a welcome step towards correcting our readiness challenges," said Marine Corps Asst. Commandant Gen. Glenn Walters. "Predictable, on-time and sustained budgets remain the essential requirement for the Marine Corps to meet our obligations."

A long list of concerns remains, said Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., the

'We've turned the corner. Now we must accelerate ... to ensure America's airmen are more ready, more lethal to fight any adversary anywhere on the planet.'

Gen. Stephen Wilson
Air Force vice chief of staff

chairman of the subcommittee.

The Air Force has 30 percent fewer airmen since Operation Desert Storm and fewer than half of squadrons are ready to fight in high-intensity combat, he said. The Marine Corps has 32 of its 38 required amphibious warships. And last year's Navy ship collisions that left 17 sailors dead have highlighted the need for more thorough training, he said.

Now, with a potential boost in servicemembers with the proposed 2019 budget, the Navy has undertaken new oversight efforts and training, the Air Force has initiated new acquisition reforms, the average number of flight hours has grown for the Marine Corps and the Air Force has boosted its airmen and equipment with the 2017 funding.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., the ranking Democrat of the subcommittee, said it was clear that funding will be key to keep readiness recovery efforts going.

"You've all talked about how

you feel like we're on a path and we're making progress on the path," he said. "We have a long way to giving you certainty the budget will enable you to continue on the path."

Military leaders acknowledged that movement on an overall budget plan in recent days has provided much-needed momentum.

"We've turned the corner," said Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Stephen Wilson. "Now we must accelerate, gain speed and climb to ensure America's airmen are more ready, more lethal to fight any adversary anywhere on the planet."

On Feb. 9, Congress reached a two-year deal to lift budget caps for defense spending. This week, the Pentagon released proposed 2019 budget plans.

However, Congress has yet to appropriate the money for the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years and must reach a new deal by March 23, the expiration date of the current temporary spending measure.

The budget caps deal "goes a long way toward much needed financial stability in building a more lethal military force," said Navy Adm. William Moran, vice chief of naval operations. Once the 2018 budget is enacted, "we will aggressively and responsibly accelerate our readiness recovery plan to earn your trust."

Inhofe said he was pleased by the feedback from leaders that they've made key progress on readiness despite budget instability concerns.

"We're on the mend," Inhofe said. "That's the message here today."

grisales.claudia@starsandstripes.com
Twitter: @cgrisales

PACIFIC



Spc. Philip Brown records the luge event Tuesday during the 2018 Winter Olympic Games.



Michele Carkhuff and Capt. Michael Carkhuff prepare for the long journey home to Camp Humphreys, South Korea, after attending the Winter Games on Tuesday.

Troops take in the Olympic experience

BY MARCUS FICHTL

Stars and Stripes

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Many American troops and their families on the Korean Peninsula are taking a “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity to attend the Winter Olympics this month.

Dozens of military personnel lined the luge track in Pyeongchang on Tuesday to cheer on Olympian and Army Sgt. Emily Sweeney as she zoomed down the ice.

The gutsy slider crashed out of medal contention in spectacular fashion on her final run but managed to walk off the track while her comrades cheered, “Go Emily!” and “Go Sgt. Sweeney!”

Most of the troops watching the luge were from Camp Humphreys, the Eighth Army’s sprawling new home south of Seoul. They got a free trip to the games with the help of a donation from the Association of the U.S. Army.

“It’s a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I don’t think I’ll ever be around a future Olympics,” said Spc. Joshua Dorsey, 25, of Indianapolis, who made the trek to Pyeongchang with co-workers from the Eighth Army motor pool.

Spc. Philip Brown took a selfie in front of the luge track with a competitor in the background, barreling down the ice at 80 mph.

“I don’t really leave post, so this was a good experience to get out and go do something,” said the 23-year-old from Massachusetts.

The engineer, who normally trains to counter North Korean aggression, was hopeful but skeptical of the North’s involvement, proudly pronouncing where his loyalties lie.



Sgt. Emily Sweeney waves as she walks from a crash on the luge track Tuesday.

“I’m a soldier; I stand for my country,” Brown said.

Before the race the troops explored the Olympic village, checked out virtual-reality versions of some of the events and took more photos with Korean pop stars who made their virtual likenesses available to visitors.

As they walked around, local kids swarmed the troops, asking who they were and where they came from.

Sporting Team USA gear, military spouse Michele Carkhuff and her husband were a popular target for local photographers. The 38-year-old Honolulu native was impressed by unification flags at the event that depict a blue Korean Peninsula against a white background.

“We saw the unification flag — that stood out as a poignant moment for us,” Carkhuff said. “It was like, ‘Wow they’re coming together for something greater than their differences.’ That was surreal for us.”

fichtl.marcus@stripes.com
Twitter: @marcusfichti



The luge track with the ski jumping hill in the background is seen Tuesday at Pyeongchang, South Korea.

PHOTOS BY MARCUS FICHTL/Stars and Stripes

PACIFIC

USS McCain's former XO guilty of dereliction of duty

By TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS John S. McCain's former executive officer has been found guilty of dereliction of duty in connection with a collision that killed 10 sailors last summer.

The judgment for Cmdr. Jessie Sanchez, who served as second-in-command of the destroyer when it crashed into an oiler tanker east of Singapore on Aug. 21, came Monday during a series of nonjudicial punishment hearings held in the wake of fatal collisions last year involving the McCain and the USS Fitzgerald, the Navy announced in a statement Thursday.

Sanchez received a punitive letter of reprimand as a result of the findings, the announcement said.

The hearings were conducted by Adm. Frank Caldwell, who was tapped in Octo-

Cmdr. Jessie Sanchez received a punitive letter of reprimand.

ber to oversee disciplinary actions for the accidents. He also dismissed charges for an officer and an enlisted crewmember from the Fitzgerald, the Navy statement said. Seven sailors died on that ship after it collided with a cargo vessel on June 17 off the coast of mainland Japan.

Monday's proceedings were the last planned nonjudicial punishment hearings held for the collisions, the statement added.

Article 32 hearings to consider court-martialing Cmdr. Bryce Benson, who commanded the Fitzgerald, and Cmdr. Alfredo Sanchez, former commander of the McCain, and three Fitzgerald officers are

scheduled for March 6-8 at the Navy Yard in Washington.

Benson and Sanchez both face charges that include negligent homicide, hazarding a ship and dereliction of duty.

Earlier this month, the Navy punished four sailors for their roles in the collisions.

The executive officer, command master chief and one officer from the Fitzgerald were found guilty of dereliction in the performance of duties and received a punitive letter of reprimand. An enlisted sailor from the McCain was also found guilty of dereliction in the performance of duties and received a punitive letter of reprimand, forfeiture of a half-month's pay for two months and a reduction in rate to the next inferior paygrade. The forfeiture of pay and reduction in rate were suspended for six months.

Caldwell dismissed the nonjudicial punishment charges of one officer and another enlisted sailor from the McCain.

Several sailors have either been fired or forced into retirement in the wake of the collisions.

Last year, the Navy relieved the ships' commanders along with the head of 7th Fleet. The leaders of Task Force 70 and Destroyer Squadron 15, which oversee the fleet's destroyers and cruisers, were also relieved of their duties.

In September, Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Scott Swift announced he would retire at an unspecified date after being told he would not be the Navy's pick to take over U.S. Pacific Command after Adm. Harry Harris retires this year.

Last month, former Surface Forces head Vice Adm. Thomas Rowden retired early in light of unspecified disciplinary actions recommended against him in a probe of the collisions.

hlavac.tyler@stripes.com
Twitter: @WyattWolson

Hawaii-based missile defense radar system to be operational by 2023

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A beefed-up missile defense radar system for Hawaii is expected to be operational by 2023, but the deployment of a state-based interceptor system remains undecided, the head of U.S. Pacific Command said Wednesday.

The siting process for the Homeland Defense Radar-Hawaii is nearly complete, with a contract for the work expected to be awarded this year, Adm. Harris said in written testimony submitted as part of a hearing before the U.S. House Armed Services Committee.

"The new radar will provide an enhanced ballistic missile sensing and discrimination capability in the Pacific and will increase the capability of the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System to defend the state of Hawaii," Harris said. "This radar is being built to stay ahead of potential future threats."

The Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System uses interceptors launched from Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

North Korea is the pre-eminent missile threat to Hawaii, Harris cited its Sept. 3 nuclear test and the Nov. 28 test launch of a Hwasong-15 long-range intercontinental ballistic missile as recent examples of the rogue regime's pursuit of weapons that could be used on American soil.

The Missile Defense Agency is requesting nearly \$100 million in fiscal 2019 for the Hawaii radar system and a similar system elsewhere in the Pacific for a location yet to be announced.

"One of the things that we need to do is maintain custody of the threat from birth to death, and so with terrestrial-based radars we have to put them in locations that we can maintain custody," said Gary Pennett, MDA's director of operations, during a budget briefing for reporters at the Pentagon Monday.

Harris was less certain about the step beyond the Hawaii radar system, which would be some sort of Hawaii-based missile interception system.

"I'm not smart enough to zero in on a system for Hawaii," said Harris, who is expected to retire in May and has been nominated for an ambassadorship to Australia.

As he has said in the past, Harris told lawmakers he advocates for the MDA to conduct a study to determine which system of Hawaii-specific interceptors would

work best.

A couple of options are Aegis Ashore, which shoots down short- to intermediate-range missiles, and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, which also defends against ballistic missiles up to intermediate range, Harris said. The answer might also be some other "ground-based interceptor capability" in Hawaii.

"I think all those should be looked at," he said. "I think today — from the threat that we face in Hawaii from North Korea —

Aegis Ashore and THAAD might not be the best platforms for Hawaii given the trajectory and the geometries of the missiles that are launched."

North Korea only last year began test-launching long-range missiles that could reach America.

Harris said he is "confident" for now that the missile interceptors fired from California and Alaska are sufficient to protect Hawaii, which is headquarters to PACOM, the Pacific Fleet, U.S. Army Pacific and Pacific Air

Forces, as well as home to Pacific Missile Range Facility Barking Sands. "But I think in the years ahead, it would do us well to at least study the possibility of putting some kind of interceptor capability in Hawaii," he said.

"Given where we think the North Korean capability might be in terms of their missiles in three or four years, in the early 2020s, I think we must continue to improve our missile defenses," he said.

olson.wyatt@stripes.com
Twitter: @WyattWolson

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MILITARY

Civilian doctors in Europe move for unionization

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Civilian doctors at military hospitals and clinics in Europe are moving forward with an effort to unionize, citing low morale and compensation as well as staff shortages they say limit access to care.

"Reports are of bad morale at (Landstuhl) Regional Medical Center and a need for representation across the board, but the doctors are particularly anxious for representation. So we decided to file for them first," said Peter Winch, a representative with the American Federation of Government Employees in Washington.

There are roughly 45 civilian doctors in Europe, stationed mainly at Landstuhl, with smaller numbers at outlying military clinics.

A separate effort is also underway to unionize roughly 600 other civilians, such as Europe-based medical technicians, administrative staff and nurses, union organizers say.

Regional Health Command Europe said Thursday that "management neither opposes nor supports the effort to unionize."

"The Federal Labor Relations Authority makes the final determination on an appropriate collective bargaining unit," RHCE spokesman Gino Mattorano said in a statement.

However, RHCE is disputing the criticisms from doctors, say-

ing its facilities "meet or exceed the standard for patient appointments and [personnel] have opened our clinics over training holidays to further increase access to care."

"U.S. Army Europe's Medical Readiness Rate is among the highest in the Army," Mattorano said in a statement. "A primary contributor to that readiness is the availability of care RHCE medical treatment facilities provide."

Mattorano said there is no shortage of staffers.

Another criticism from doctors is pay disparity between overseas civilian doctors and their state-side counterparts. Doctors said the medical command has withheld performance awards for top doctors.

"Once again, these have always been automatic, but under this command they are being withheld or delayed for some reason," said one doctor, who requested anonymity because of fears of reprisal.

The medical command disputed the claims, saying salaries are comparable with other private sector health facilities and that bonuses are paid when earned.

"Our compensation packages have enabled us to hire clinical staff without difficulty," Mattorano said.

The doctors have obtained enough signatures of interest — roughly 70 percent of them — to petition to unionize, Winch said.



OLIVER SOMMER/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Staff of the 212th Combat Support Hospital set up a field hospital during a November exercise in Landstuhl, Germany. Civilian doctors at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center are seeking to unionize.

A notice to employees was issued by the Federal Labor Relations Authority last month and was posted at Landstuhl and medical buildings on other bases.

The rest of the civilian medical staff in Europe is also collecting signatures and a formal petition to unionize could come in a matter of weeks, said Winch, who has bargained contracts for unionized doctors at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

While it is commonplace for federal employees in the U.S. to have union representation, it's rare in Europe. If successful, the campaign would be the first time Europe-based medical personnel organize into a union.

"When you get a union in, you have a voice on the job when it comes to negotiating work conditions," Winch said.

Last week, Winch and military medical command officials consulted with the FLRA to chart a way forward.

The FLRA will review the case and issue a ruling. If it is in favor

of the doctors, a secret ballot election among them could be held within six months, Winch said.

A group of five doctors, a civilian technician and a nurse who are pushing for unionizing cited a wide range of complaints as the motivation for organizing.

Initial contracts for doctors in Europe are three years, which can be extended to two more years. A "five-year rule" limits tours to that length, which doctors say results in too much turnover and lack of continuity of care and fosters a work environment that stifles criticism.

Doctors who criticize hospital management or highlight problems risk not getting their contracts renewed, union organizers say.

"You feel like the leadership will retaliate and not extend your contract," said another doctor, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Most military civilians overseas are subject to the five-year rule, but there are some excep-

tions, such as for teachers. Doctors say it makes sense that they too be counted as exempt, given their critical skills.

Hospital workers who are part of the unionization effort said frequent turnover due to enforcement of the five-year-rule has resulted in care interruptions and an influx of less-experienced staff.

RHCE disagreed. "This has minimal impact on continuity of patient care because the vast majority of patients enrolled to LRM remain in Germany for a much shorter time than five years," Mattorano said. Still, a hospital staffer who spent a large part of his active-duty career at LRM before turning civilian said morale has plummeted.

"It feels like things have spiraled out of control and everyone is looking for a voice," said the staffer, who is one of the leaders in the effort to unionize.

vandiver.john@stripes.com
Twitter: @john_vandiver

Actor Tom Hanks joins Marine vet's effort to make movie

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

Tom Hanks, who portrayed a dogged Ranger captain who hit the beach on D-Day in "Saving Private Ryan," is giving a major boost to a former Marine's efforts to make a film about another engagement during that bloody World War II battle.

Hanks has signed on as executive producer of "No Better Place to Die" by Dale Dye, '73, a combat veteran whose acting and technical assistance added authenticity and gravitas to film and television vehicles like "Saving Private Ryan," "Band of Brothers" and "Platoon."

Dye's film will tell the story of Able Company, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, which parachuted into France with its British counterparts ahead of the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. Troops were tasked with taking and holding



Courtesy of Dale Dye

Dale Dye, right, directs Tom Hanks on the set of Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan." Dye, a Marine combat veteran, is working on a film about another World War II battle that Hanks has signed onto.

the vital La Fière bridge over the Merderet River and an adjacent causeway, reinforced by gliderborne infantry.

Their objectives were critical to the invasion's success as they connected the Normandy beachheads with the rest of the countryside.

If they failed to hold the bridges against a vicious German counterattack that was guaranteed to come, the Allies hitting the beaches would be cut to pieces.

Their attack started in the morning. By nightfall, they had suffered 50 percent casualties.

Dye hopes to start shooting the film this summer so it's ready for the 75th Anniversary of D-Day in 2019.

Along with his producer role, Hanks is slated to act in the film. Dye and Hanks have a "long-standing personal and creative relationship" that dates to 1994's "Forrest Gump," Dye said in a statement. "I'm very glad to be teaming with Dale on this project," Hanks said, according to the statement Dye issued this week. "It's an important story that needs to be told as we approach the 75th Anniversary of D-Day."

Dye had struggled to find backers to produce "No Better Place to Die," which he wrote in 2011 and hoped to direct, using as many veterans as possible in acting and production roles. He began by turning to his fellow veterans to generate buzz and raised an initial \$100,000 to get the project off the ground.

"I'm fairly confident we can get

this done now," Dye told Stars and Stripes in an email this week. "I'm still committed to using as many real veterans in front of and behind the cameras as possible."

Two Hollywood agencies — Creative Artists Agency and Gersh — are arranging financing, Dye said. They will also represent its domestic distribution rights.

Dye has said his film will serve as a prequel of sorts to "Saving Private Ryan," which was directed by Steven Spielberg and took home five Academy Awards. Dye has vowed the same hard-hitting delivery, though he believes the action will be more intense.

"This is such an important and dramatic story that I've always wondered why no one has made a movie about it," he said. "It's a thrilling and inspiring look at how our American soldiers — back then and right now today — can overcome long odds with guts and determination."

burke.matt@stripes.com

WAR ON TERRORISM

UN: 2017 fighting killed, hurt more than 10K Afghan civilians

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Mohammad Salim was driving his taxi in central Kabul in September when his wife called and begged him to return home. The Taliban had launched an attack on the airport from the family's neighborhood, and she didn't want him out.

He returned and was eating lunch with his family when everything went black.

"Our house collapsed," Salim said. "I was wounded and bleeding, and my daughter was screaming from underneath the rubble. Only her hand was visible."

An errant U.S. missile had struck Salim's home, destroying it and injuring eight family members. It contributed to a record tally of civilian casualties caused by American and Afghan airstrikes last year, according to the United Nations.

While overall civilian casualties in Afghanistan were down 9 percent due to fewer injuries on the ground, airstrikes resulted in 631 civilian casualties, including 295 deaths and 336 wounded, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said in a report released Thursday.

Airstrike casualties were up 7 percent from 2016, marking the highest annual tally ever announced by the mission, which began documentation in 2009.

The Afghan air force was responsible for 309 of those casualties, the UNAMA said, while international military forces caused 246, including 154 deaths. The U.S. is the only foreign force conducting airstrikes in Afghanistan.

There also were 76 casualties

attributed to undetermined pro-government forces, the UNAMA added.

The UNAMA said it was particularly concerned about 114 children's deaths caused by airstrikes last year.

"Even if they are mistakes, they are attacking, and they are harming civilians," said Salim's father, Ghulam Rabani, who was also at the family home when it was hit in September. "After this incident, I don't trust the government or the Americans."

NATO's Resolute Support Mission disputed the numbers. It said its "detailed operational records" showed just 51 civilian casualties were proved to have been caused by international forces in 2017 — nearly five times fewer than the U.N. tally. Only 19 of those were fatalities. Mission officials said 133 cases were disputed.

The U.N. and international military forces in Afghanistan historically have disagreed about civilian casualty figures and use different methodologies for calculating them. "In some instances, a civilian casualty report may contain insufficient detail to allow RS to make a determination regarding its veracity," Resolute Support said in a statement. "In those instances, the report is considered 'disputed.'"

The new data, which the UNAMA said "raises concerns about the effectiveness of precautions taken by pro-government forces to avoid civilian casualties during airstrikes," follows months of concern from observers that the White House's new strategy for Afghanistan could result in greater bloodshed and could undermine international efforts in the country.

Officially revealed in August, that strategy includes more firepower and relaxed restrictions on targeting the Taliban. Air Force data show the U.S. releasing more than triple the number of bombs and similar weapons last year it did in 2016.

Meanwhile, the Afghan air force, according to its own data, nearly doubled to 425 the number of strikes it conducted in a recent 10-month period.

Despite questioning precautions taken by the U.S. and Afghanistan to avoid harming civilians, the UNAMA acknowledged that the sharp spike in airstrikes was not matched by an equally sharp spike in civilian casualties caused by them.

"While emphasizing that no civilian casualties are acceptable, the reduced harm ratio suggests improvements in targeting and civilian protection procedures," the report said.

Overall, the report documented 10,453 civilian casualties, including 3,438 deaths and 7,015 injured. That remains significantly higher than pre-2014 figures when NATO was engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan instead of solely training, advising and assisting national forces.

U.S. airstrikes conducted in Afghanistan are carried out under a separate mission from NATO.

Ground engagements accounted for one-third of all Afghan civilian casualties last year, but those were surpassed by bombings, including suicide and complex attacks.

The deadliest single incident within the report happened in Kabul on May 31, when a suicide attacker detonated a truck laden with military-grade explosives in a densely populated area, killing



PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

Ghulam Rabani, left, and his nephew, Fardin, who uses just one name, stand in a second-story room of their home in Kabul on Oct. 8, 2017, as Rabani explains how a U.S. missile destroyed the house more than a week before, injuring several family members.

more than 90 people and injuring nearly 500.

One of the deadliest attacks of the 16-year war occurred just last month, when an ambulance packed with explosives was detonated in central Kabul, killing more than 100 people.

Abdul Sattar, who runs a bakery in the city, was wounded by the blast.

"There was a strong wave that pushed me over and I went unconscious," he told Stars and Stripes, adding that his chest and one of his arms were injured. He said that while the new U.N. data was disheartening, it wasn't surprising.

"The security situation is getting worse every year," Sattar said. "Everyone in Kabul lives in great fear; no one knows what's going to happen next."

The UNAMA report blamed anti-government elements for 65 percent of civilian casualties in Afghanistan last year, a 3 percent drop. The report attributed 42 percent of attacks to the Taliban, 10 percent to Islamic State and 13 percent to undetermined and other anti-government elements.

Responding to the findings, the Taliban said they were "obviously biased toward Americans and the

Kabul administration."

"The figures of civilian casualties mentioned in the UNAMA report are not acceptable to us and we categorically reject it," the group said in a statement.

While Resolute Support also disagreed with the UNAMA's findings, it said it recognized the mission's "important efforts."

"We shall continue our comprehensive effort to avoid civilian casualties and, when they are alleged to have occurred, to thoroughly investigate," a Resolute Support statement said.

After the U.S. strike on his home in September, which cost his hearing in one ear and left him and his young daughter with other lingering health problems, Salim said he hopes the international forces keep their word.

"We know that the Taliban are killing most of the civilians and wounding them. They are the enemies of everyone," Salim said. "But we hope that in the future, the foreign forces and the Afghan forces are more careful. They should not target poor and innocent people, because they are here to help us."

wellman.phillip@starsandstripes.com
Twitter: @pwwellman

Taliban letter urges Americans to rethink Afghanistan War effort

By PAMELA CONSTABLE
The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — Taliban insurgents on Wednesday issued an extraordinary, 17-page letter to the world press, asking them to pressure U.S. officials to end the nearly 17-year-old conflict in Afghanistan and asserting that the protracted American "occupation" had brought only death, corruption and drugs to the impoverished country.

The letter, emailed to the media in English and four other languages, contained official statistics about the human and economic costs of the war, and in parts it used a reasonable, almost academic tone to make its arguments. In other sections, it reverted to a more familiar accusatory tone, referring to U.S. officials as "warmongers" and "users."

"Prolonging the war in Afghanistan and maintaining American troop presence is neither beneficial for America nor for anyone else," the document said, calling on U.S. citizens, legislators and others to "read this letter prudently" and to evaluate the "costs and benefits of continuing the fight." "Stubbornly seeking the protraction

of this war," it added, will have "dreadful consequences" for the region and the "stability of America herself."

The letter, sent under the banner of "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," was issued just weeks after a blitz of deadly insurgent attacks in the Afghan capital that have left the government struggling to cope with increased public anxiety and anger. It also came as the Trump administration is ramping up a new military strategy, involving thousands of additional troops, to expand the Afghan security forces and to train them to defend their country independently.

While insisting that "our preference is to solve the Afghan issue through peaceful dialogues," the letter also warned that Taliban forces "cannot be subdued by sheer force" and that seeking a peaceful solution does not mean "that we are exhausted or our will has been sapped."

This combination of outreach and threat has been a hallmark of Taliban statements, including a shorter one issued shortly after the spate of attacks last month that killed more than 150 people in urban population centers. The insurgent group has insisted

that it will not revive peace talks unless foreign troops leave the country, and it has rejected repeated feelers from the administration of President Ashraf Ghani.

A spokesman for Ghani, Shah Hussain Murtazavi, responded sharply to the letter, saying: "We never negotiate with groups who resort to crime and the brutal killing of people and then claim responsibility for it. The door of peace is shut to them, but the door of peace is open to those groups who have expressed their hatred for such crimes."

The Taliban appeal, whose authenticity was confirmed in a brief telephone conversation with insurgent spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, was aimed primarily at a U.S. audience. What was new about it was the use of published statistics and logical arguments — not just ideological harangues — to persuade the American citizenry that its government's lengthy investment in the war has been a dire mistake.

The letter's talking points included a list of goals that the U.S. government had set out to achieve in entering the war, including eliminating terrorism, establishing the rule of law and eradicating drugs. It

then systematically presented arguments, backed up with international statistics but also exaggerated for effect, to show that these efforts had failed or had extremely negative consequences.

"As confirmed by your own military authorities, 3546 American and foreign soldiers have been killed, more than 20,000 American forces injured and tens of thousands more are suffering mentally," the letter said, asserting that the actual casualty figures were much higher but were being "concealed" by U.S. leaders.

The casualty figures cited in the letter track with those provided by the U.S. military.

The overall message of the arguments was that the American people should make a "rational" assessment of the war effort, realize that it is backfiring, and prevail upon their leaders to withdraw.

"You proclaim to be a developed and civilized nation," the letter said. "We leave it to your judgment to decide" whether the prevailing conditions of "insecurity, chaos" and "soaring drug problems in Afghanistan" constitute "reforms or crimes against humanity."

MILITARY

Policy: DOD focused on ensuring troop readiness

FROM FRONT PAGE

He likened the problem to Amazon having 14 percent of its staff out sick on Christmas week. If that were to happen, Amazon would not be "the largest company in the world," he said.

In July, alarmed at the numbers of servicemembers who were unable to deploy for medical reasons, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis tasked Wilkie with finding the problems and resolving them. It turned out a large number were unable to deploy for the simple reason of not having gone to the dentist, Wilkie said. That falls on the shoulders of junior officers who are responsible for ensuring their servicemembers are ready to deploy, Wilkie said.

Another issue was recruiting. During years of slow recruiting, the military offered "too many" medical waivers, Wilkie said. Those medical problems follow the servicemembers through their service careers.

Wilkie said the military also needs to get its fitness and training programs up to standards to



BRIGITT N. BRANTLEY/Courtesy of the Defense Department

Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert Wilkie instituted a policy giving servicemembers 12 months to be ready for deployment or be forced out of the military.

ensure its forces are healthy.

The new policy will give servicemembers 12 months to be ready for deployment from the time they are called on to deploy or they will be forced out, Wilkie said. There will be exceptions, he said, including pregnancy and postpartum, and wounded servicemembers.

Exceptions aside, the policy will be "an across-the-board standard that will apply to everyone," he said, emphasizing the enormity of 286,000 nondeployable servicemembers.

"It is a staggering number, and in this world, where the forces are at a premium and we are struggling to maintain the ranks, we need to get a grip on this," he said.

cahn.dianna@stripes.com
Twitter: @diannacahn

Congressman calls for war tax

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Rep. Walter Jones Jr., R-N.C., a senior member of the House Armed Service Committee, called Thursday for an unpopular response to the ballooning U.S. deficit — a war tax. He made the sobering comments at a congressional forum for the Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Coalition, where much of the theme was focused on boosting the U.S. military ship supply.

The national debt is nearing \$21 trillion and is slated to nearly eclipse the gross domestic product, a benchmark of economic health, by 2028.

"It cannot keep going that way if we want a strong military. There needs to be a national push for a dedicated war tax," Jones told military, congressional and industry representatives. "That's not very popular to say around many people, but if you want a strong military you have to pay for it. Congress cannot continue to borrow from the next generation."

While talk of a war tax has come up before as U.S. debt grows amid the longest U.S. war, the unpopular idea hasn't seen much traction.

On Monday, the Pentagon released a 2019 budget plan seeking a 10 percent increase in funding to

\$686.1 billion to grow the size and might of the military, primarily in response to China and Russia's growing capabilities.

"It's a lot of money. I'm a taxpayer like anybody else," said Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller, the forum's keynote speaker. Like the other services, "all I can assure you is your Marine Corps ... (is) going to do everything we can to get the best value for every dollar we get," he said.

Lawmakers have yet to appropriate money for the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years, which is slated to happen later this year.

President Donald Trump's overall \$4.4 trillion 2019 budget proposal faces criticism, as the plan could add \$7 trillion to the U.S. deficit. Still, experts say the Pentagon portion of that budget proposal is poised to win Capitol Hill support.

Last week, lawmakers reached a two-year deal to exceed 2019 statutory spending limits.

"I want to see a strong military, and I want the Congress to have the courage to have this kind of debate sooner rather than later," Jones said. "This game of ... borrowing from the next generation is a sin."

Supporters of expanding the U.S. supply of amphibious ships said Thursday that Trump's pro-

posed budget still falls short.

"I am disappointed," Rep. Donal McEachin, D-Va., a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said of the ship funding.

The Marines must reach 38 amphibious ships, said Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va. While Trump's 2019 budget calls for \$21 billion for 10 ships, the floor must be \$26.2 billion and 13 ships, Wittman said.

This year's 30-year shipbuilding plan of 342 ships also falls short, and should be 355, he said.

"We have to get off the roller-coaster ride of building some ships," said Wittman, chair of the Seapower and Projection Forces subpanel. "Our Marines are great ... but until we can get them to walk on water, we need to build them ships."

The Marines have 31 ships in inventory, and nearly half are in maintenance, said Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., chair of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower.

"A lot of work remains," Wicker said. "This is a sad testimony to years of budget instability. ... But I hope those days are over. I'm hopeful that the budget agreement will not only plug readiness holes but also spark a serious and sustained expansion of the fleet."

grisales.claudia@stripes.com
Twitter: @cgrisales

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STARS AND STRIPES®

NATION

Leaders cite mental illness in Fla. shooting

By TERRY SPENCER
AND KELLI KENNEDY
Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. — An orphaned 19-year-old with a troubled past and his own AR-15 rifle was charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder Thursday morning following the deadliest school shooting in the U.S. in five years.

Law enforcement officials told The Associated Press that Nikolas Cruz legally purchased the assault weapon used in the attack.

Students thought it was just another drill at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School when a fire alarm sounded, requiring them to file out of their classrooms Wednesday afternoon. That's when police say Cruz, equipped with a gas mask, smoke grenades and magazines of ammunition, opened fire with a semi-automatic weapon, killing 17 people and sending hundreds of students fleeing into the streets.

AS reactions poured in Thursday, President Donald Trump focused on the young man's mental health, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he wants the Justice Department to study how mental illness and criminality intersect, to better understand how law enforcement can use existing laws to intervene before school shootings begin.

Republican Gov. Rick Scott said he's already told Florida House Speaker Richard Corcoran that if someone with mental illness, he should not have access to a gun.

Broward County Schools Superintendent Rob Runcie said "now is the time to have a real conversation about gun control in this state," and adults can't manage that in their lifetimes, he said students will do it.

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel called for giving law enforcement more power to detain people who make threats.

"What I'm asking our lawmak-



In this frame grab from video, students evacuate Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., after a shooting Wednesday. A former student is charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder.

ers to do is go back to places like Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., to give police the power," the sheriff said, to detain people who make graphic threats or post disturbing material online, and bring them involuntarily to mental health professionals to be examined.

The sheriff said law enforcement can certainly visit gun owners whose mental health is questioned, "whether they have a gun legally or not."

In a national address from the White House, Trump said he wants America's children to know, "you are never alone, and you never will be."

He said no child should have to go to school fearing for their lives. He said he'll travel to Florida to meet with victims' families, explore how to better secure schools and "tackle the difficult issue of mental health."

At no point did Trump mention guns or how to control them. Thirteen wounded survivors

were hospitalized, including two people in critical condition. The sheriff said some bodies remained inside Douglas High on Thursday as authorities investigate the crime scene. The slain included a school athletic director and another adult who worked as a monitor at the school. Runcie called them heroes.

Cruz was ordered held without bond and booked into jail, still wearing a hospital gown after he also was treated for labored breathing. The jail said he is 5-foot-7 and weighs 131 pounds.

It was the nation's deadliest school shooting since a gunman attacked an elementary school in Newtown, Conn., more than five years ago. The overall death toll differs by how such shootings are defined, but Everytown For Gun Safety has tallied 291 school shootings in America since 2013, and this attack makes 18 so far this year.

Trump lamented in a tweet that there were "So many signs that

the Florida shooter was mentally disturbed, even expelled from school for bad and erratic behavior. Neighbors and classmates knew he was a big problem. Must always report such instances to authorities, again and again!"

Cruz legally purchased the AR-15 used in the attack about a year ago, law enforcement officials told the AP. The officials, not authorized to discuss this publicly, spoke on condition of anonymity. Federal law allows people 18 and older to legally purchase long guns, including this kind of assault weapon.

FBI agent Rob Lasky said the agency investigated a 2017 YouTube comment posted with the screen name Nikolas Cruz that said "I'm going to be a professional school shooter." Lasky said the FBI did a database review, but couldn't determine the time or location of the post or the true identity of the person making the comment.

Coach dies shielding students

Associated Press

A football coach who also worked as a security guard is among the dead in a school shooting that claimed 17 lives in Parkland, Fla.

The football program at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School tweeted that assistant coach Aaron Feis died while selflessly shielding students.

The tweet ended: "He died a hero and he will forever be in our hearts and memories."

Feis graduated from the school in 1999 and worked mainly with the junior varsity, the team website said. It said he lived in nearby Coral Springs with his wife and daughter.

At a Thursday news conference, Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said his two sons played for Feis.

"When Aaron Feis died, when he was killed tragically, he did it protecting others because that is who Aaron Feis was," the sheriff said.



Aaron Feis

Students: Shooting suspect harassed peers, bragged about gun

By KELLI KENNEDY
Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. — Students and neighbors describe the suspect in the deadly rampage at a Florida high school as a troubled teenager who threatened and harassed peers, talked about killing animals, posed with guns in disturbing photos on social media, and bragged about target practice in his backyard with a pellet gun.

Nikolas Cruz, 19, had been expelled from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School for disciplinary reasons, Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said but he said he didn't know the specifics. Math teacher Jim Gard told the Miami Herald that before Wednesday's fatal shooting of 17 people, Cruz may have been identified as a potential threat — Gard believes the school had sent out an email warning teachers that Cruz shouldn't be allowed on



Cruz

campus with a backpack.

"There were problems with him last year threatening students, and I guess he was asked to leave campus," Gard told the

paper. Student Victoria Olvera, 17, said Cruz had been abusive to his ex-girlfriend and that his expulsion was over a fight with her new boyfriend. He'd been attending another school in Broward County since the expulsion, school officials said.

Jonathan Guimaraes, 17, told the Miami Herald that he had been in JROTC with Cruz. "He was quiet, nice," Guimaraes said. "That's how he was

able to blend in. He was wearing his JROTC uniform."

Cruz had on a maroon polo shirt bearing an ROTC insignia and the school's eagle mascot when he was arrested Wednesday.

Cruz was an orphan — his mother, Lynda Cruz died of pneumonia Nov. 1, neighbors, friends and family members said, according to the Sun Sentinel. Cruz and her husband, who died of a heart attack years ago, adopted Nikolas and his biological brother, Zachary, after the couple moved from Long Island in New York to Broward County. The boys were left in the care of a family friend after their mother died, family member Barbara Kumbatovich, of Long Island, said.

Unhappy there, Nikolas Cruz asked to move in with a friend's family in Broward. The family agreed, and Cruz moved in around Thanksgiving. According to lawyer Jim Lewis, who represents

but did not identify the family, they made Cruz keep the AR-15 in a locked cabinet and never saw him go to a shooting range with it. He had the key, however.

Cruz passed a background check and legally purchased the assault weapon from a licensed dealer in February 2017, a law enforcement official familiar with the investigation but not authorized to discuss it publicly told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The family is devastated and shocked, lawyer Lewis said. During the three months Cruz lived there, he was respectful and quiet but also said over his mother's death, Lewis told the AP.

"No indication that anything severe like this was wrong," Lewis said. "Just a mildly troubled kid who'd lost his mom."

The family's son, a junior, was at the school when the shooting happened, Lewis said. The fam-

ily is cooperating as their home is searched, and in one case he is suspected of wrongdoing, he added.

Longtime Cruz family neighbors Malcolm and Christine Roxburgh told the Sun Sentinel that the police came to the boy's house many times, as he used to get in trouble and harass people. Malcolm Roxburgh said a neighbor across the street kept pigs, and Nikolas Cruz targeted the family.

"He didn't like the pigs and didn't like the neighbors, so he sent over his dog over there to try to attack them," Roxburgh said.

And, the couple said, when the boy didn't want to go to school, he would bang his head against a cement wall. They were scared of him. "He could have killed any of us," Christine Roxburgh said.

Cruz was getting treatment at a mental health clinic for a while, but hadn't been there for more than a year, Broward County Mayor Beam Furr told CNN.

VETERANS

Officials show restraint with Shulkin on IG report

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — When put in a position Thursday to question Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin — who's facing allegations of poor judgment and misconduct regarding an official trip to Europe last summer — lawmakers were mostly restrained.

Shulkin faced the 24-member House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on Thursday morning, the day after the release of a scathing VA inspector general report that found a misuse of taxpayer dollars during Shulkin's trip with his wife and VA staff to London and Copenhagen, Denmark, in July.

At the request of committee Chairman Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., questions Thursday were focused mostly on the budget and other issues at the agency, and the travel controversy didn't bleed much into the previously scheduled hearing.

Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., the ranking Democrat on the committee, said that together, the committee chose "not to allow partisan grilling to go on."

In an opening statement, Shulkin told congressmen he already had written a check to the U.S. Treasury for travel expenses that a VA watchdog found were covered improperly by taxpayer dollars.

"I'm grateful for the decision to reimburse the federal government and move on," Walz said.

Some lawmakers took the opportunity to publicly express their disappointment about the report's findings before moving on to other issues.

"I do think it's important to restore confidence in our executive officials," said Rep. Ann McLane Kuster, D-N.H. "So I hope in the coming days, you'll be forthcoming with the American people."

Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., said he appreciated the seriousness of how Shulkin was addressing the allegations. Rep. Elizabeth Esty, D-Conn., echoed that, stating, "I appreciate your willingness to speak with us on the IG's report, and we'll speak about that at another time."

Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La., prefaced his questions by defending Shulkin. In comments directed toward the media, he said, "This is a nation where men are innocent until proven guilty. I hope it's not sliding to be a nation of allegations and accusations."

VA Inspector General Michael Missal released the report Wednesday that outlines "serious derelictions" by VA personnel regarding the 10-day trip, which included full days of leisure activities and cost taxpayers at least \$122,000. Investigators found Shulkin improperly accepted Wimbledon tickets, and they alleged the VA chief of staff doctored an email to an ethics official to provide reason for taxpayer dollars to be spent on travel expenses for Shulkin's wife, Dr. Merle Bari.

Three lawyers representing Shulkin wrote a 16-page rebuttal that was attached to the inspector general's report. They wrote about "grave concerns" about the report, which they argued ignored critical facts, presented a one-sided version of events and was factually and logically flawed.

Less than two weeks before the trip in July, Shulkin issued a memorandum to top VA staff with the intent to limit travel expenses. He insisted Thursday his Europe travel was essential.

"We've had this conference for 43 straight years, and it has been attended by every VA secretary," Shulkin said. "I do recognize the optics of this are not good. I accept responsibility for that."

Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., who had a more severe reaction to the report than other lawmakers and called on Shulkin to resign Wednesday, responded: "It is not the optics that don't look good. It's the facts that don't look good."

Following the hearing, Coffman told reporters that Shulkin did not "own up to" the report's findings. Further, he asserted that President Donald Trump chose Shulkin as VA secretary only because his first three choices declined the job. Coffman also said Shulkin couldn't clean up the VA because he was a holdover from former President Barack Obama's administration and was part of the group that muddled it.

"I just don't see how this particular holdover as a secretary can change the culture of the VA when he's really such a part of it," Coffman said. "The situation in the I.G. report just demonstrates that."

Shulkin told reporters he had no plans to resign.

"I'm not going to be distracted by issues like that," he said.

Altered email, false statements

VA ethics officials initially declined to have the agency pay for Bari's travel expenses. VA Chief of Staff Vivivica Wright Simpson got involved and doctored an email to an ethics official that made it appear Shulkin would receive an award in Denmark, when in fact he did not, the report states. Under ethical rules, the government can pay for a federal employee's spouse to travel for an awards ceremony.

The email Wright Simpson changed was from another VA employee. It stated, "We're working on having a dinner at the US Ambassador's Residence in honor of SECEVA, but that has not been confirmed by US Embassy Copenhagen yet."

Wright altered the employee's words to, "We're having a special recognition dinner at the US Ambassador's Residence in the honor of SECEVA." She sent the letter to an ethics official, who approved Bari's travel expense of \$4,312.

In her first interview with investigators, Wright Simpson said she didn't recall whether she had changed the email, the report states. In the second, she gave evasive and nonresponsive answers.

Investigators found no evidence Shulkin was aware of the falsification. His lawyers wrote that he had nothing to do with the process and was prepared to pay for Bari's travel when he was told by his staff that the expenses could be reimbursed.

Investigators referred their findings about Wright Simpson to the Department of Justice, which declined to prosecute, though the actions might have violated criminal statutes, the report states.

Following Thursday's hearing, Shulkin blamed a hacker for altering the email from Wright Simpson. He alleged a hacker was still sending emails from her account and the VA was looking into it.

"We have found somebody has taken over the chief of staff's emails and is sending emails like it's her," he said. "So we need to understand that. I'm not a forensic expert, but we have found there are people sending emails from her account that's not her. That is concerning to us."



Joe Gromelski/Stars and Stripes

VA Secretary David Shulkin listens Thursday during a House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Walz said Thursday that hacking VA information systems was a "serious matter," and that he'd ask the Justice Department to look into it, if Shulkin thought it necessary.

Improperly accepted tickets?

Shulkin and Bari were given tickets to the July 15 women's final tennis match at Wimbledon by Victoria Gosling, who served as CEO of the 2016 Invictus Games in Orlando, Fla., the report states.

Investigators determined that accepting the tickets was an ethical violation. Some of their investigation focused on whether Gosling and Bari were friends. In response to a question from the designated VA ethics official, Shulkin said the two had a social friendship. Federal ethics standards allow for gifts between personal friends.

But during an interview with investigators Feb. 6, Gosling couldn't remember Bari's first name.

"Toward the end of the interview, investigators asked whether Ms. Gosling could recall the first name of Secretary Shulkin's wife," the report reads. "After a long pause, Ms. Gosling was unable to recall Dr. Bari's name, stating, 'You actually — I think that kept throwing me. I'm actually having a genuine blank here.'"

Shulkin's lawyers — Justin Shur, Eric Nitz and Emily Damrau — wrote that the pressure of the unexpected interview caused the mental block.

The 10-day trip included 3½ days of meetings with officials from the U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand to discuss veterans' issues. The rest of the time was spent on leisure activities, including visiting castles and palaces in London and Copenhagen, taking a boat tour and a river cruise, shopping and making a side trip to Malmö, Sweden.

Shulkin assigned a VA employee to spend official time planning those activities. Investigators wrote it was clear the employee spent many hours on the itinerary and "effectively acted as a personal travel concierge" to Shulkin and Bari. It was a misuse of VA resources, Missal wrote.

Shulkin's lawyers argued the trip was valuable because he participated in "hours of substantive meetings."

"Secretary Shulkin did nothing wrong in traveling to Europe to meet with and learn from America's allies," they wrote. They described it as a "valuable opportunity to strengthen the bond among allied countries whose retired soldiers are facing the

same struggles as American veterans."

While the trip cost at least \$122,334, investigators noted they were unable to determine the true cost because the VA lacked certain travel documentation. That amount includes \$42,230 for travel for Shulkin, his wife, staff and security.

Shulkin made false statements to The Washington Post about the trip, the report states, claiming he bought the Wimbledon tickets and they were not a gift from any one connected to the Invictus Games.

Shulkin to comply

In a statement that was posted to the VA website Wednesday but taken down quickly, Shulkin said he would comply with the inspector general's recommendations. The first was to pay back the U.S. Treasury for \$4,312 — the amount the VA paid for Bari's travel expenses.

The inspector general's office also recommended Shulkin consult with the VA Office of General Counsel to determine the value of the Wimbledon tickets and any food, parking and passes he and Bari may have received. That amount should be paid back to Gosling, or to the Treasury if she won't accept it.

Shulkin also should decide whether the VA should take action against Wright Simpson, the report states. And he should organize an audit of travel expenses for the European trip to determine whether there were any overpayments that should be paid back.

Lastly, the inspector general's office recommended the VA train its employees on travel planning and the ethical boundaries of accepting gifts.

Leaders of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs said Thursday they were looking forward to hearing Shulkin address everything in the report but seemed willing to give him more time.

"Your intentions to help veterans is clear, and the trust you have on this committee is strong," Walz said. "But we do need to address these allegations."

Shulkin told reporters Thursday he had spoken to Trump about the report.

"I'm going to be going over and having further discussions with him," Shulkin said. "Everybody is concerned. Everybody knows how much we have to do at the VA. We have to continue the progress. We can't let this take us off track."

wentlingnikki@stripes.com
Twitter: @nikkiwentling

NATION

Fate of 'Dreamer' deal is uncertain

Administration cool to bipartisan agreement

BY ALAN FRAM
AND KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A group of senators reached a bipartisan agreement aimed at balancing Democrats' fight to offer citizenship to young "Dreamer" immigrants with President Donald Trump's demands for billions to build his coveted border wall with Mexico. Overnight, the Trump administration denounced the deal.

The compromise was announced Wednesday by 16 senators with centrist views on the issue and was winning support from many Democrats, but it faced an uncertain fate. Leaders were trying to schedule votes on that plan and three other immigration proposals for Thursday, which they hoped would bring the chamber's showdown over the hot-button issue to a close.

Trump on Wednesday urged lawmakers to oppose any plan that doesn't meet his more stringent demands, which include curbs on legal immigration and the abolition of a visa lottery. The Senate's No. 2 Republican, John Cornyn of Texas, warned that lawmakers need to address Trump's entire proposal, saying, "We need to take the president seriously."

Trump's Department of Homeland Security, in a statement issued just before 1 a.m. Thursday, condemned the deal, saying it will "create a mass amnesty for over 10 million illegal aliens, including criminals."

The statement said the compromises would "be the end of immigration enforcement in America and only serve to draw millions more illegal aliens with no way to remove them."

There were also qualms among Democrats. The party's No. 2 Senate leader, Dick Durbin of Illinois, said some Democrats had "serious issues" with parts of the plan. Those concerns focused on its spending for Trump's wall and its bar against Dreamers sponsoring their parents for legal residency.

"We're not there yet," Durbin said of the 60 votes the proposal would need for approval.

So far, no other proposals from either side seem able to do that.

Republicans control the chamber 51-49, though Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has missed the last several weeks while battling cancer.

The bipartisan measure's sponsors included eight GOP senators. That meant just three more Republicans would be needed for it to prevail if it is backed by all 47 Democrats and the two independents who usually support them.

The compromise emerged as senators spent a third day of debate largely as they spent the first two — with the chamber floor mostly empty. Other than an initial roll call allowing formal debate to begin, there have been no other votes while party leaders talk behind the scenes about scheduling votes on specific proposals.

The centrist proposal was produced by a group led by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., that spent weeks seeking middle ground.

It would grant a 10- to 12-year route to citizenship for 1.8 million Dreamers, participants said.

That's the same number Trump has suggested helping with his own wider-ranging but more restrictive proposal. Dreamers are young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children and still have no permanent protection from deportation.

The plan would provide \$25 billion over a decade, \$2.5 billion annually, for a wall and other border security measures, the same total Trump has requested. It would bar Dreamers from sponsoring their parents for citizenship, far narrower than Trump's proposal to prevent all legal immigrants from bringing parents and siblings to the U.S.

The moderates' measure does not alter a lottery that distributes about 55,000 visas annually to people from diverse countries. Trump has proposed ending it and redistributing its visas to other immigrants, including some who are admitted based on job skills, not family ties.

The White House issued a written statement by Trump urging senators to back his bill and "oppose any legislation that fails to fulfill" his demands. The statement did not say Trump would veto a bill that fell short of them.



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVALS/AP

Sweet visit

First lady Melania Trump meets with children making cookies for Valentine's Day during her visit Wednesday to Children's Inn at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. Children's Inn is a private facility for seriously ill children and their families who are participating in clinical trials at NIH.

Trump is 'totally opposed to domestic violence of any kind'

BY JONATHAN LEMIRE
AND ZEKE MILLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump broke his silence to explicitly denounce domestic violence in the wake of allegations that a top White House aide had abused two former wives. Chief of staff John Kelly, under fire for mishandling the matter, stayed largely out of sight, his future in doubt and the White House in turmoil.

The chaos surrounding the departure of aide Rob Porter put a harsh spotlight on Kelly, the retired general who was brought on last summer to instill military-like discipline in the free-wheeling West Wing. Questions persisted about what and when Kelly knew about the abuse allegations against Porter, who resigned as staff secretary last week after the accusations became public.

West Wing aides have had their faith in the chief of staff shaken, and morale has plunged to levels not seen since last spring's firing of FBI Director James Comey and the August uproar over Trump's refusal to denounce white supremacists after

the violence in Charlottesville, Va. This White House scandal erupted initially without the president's involvement. But Trump fed the fury last week when he defended Porter and questioned the #MeToo movement that sprang up in recent months to protest the mistreatment of many women.

In Trump's first comments after Porter resigned, he praised his former aide. Next, he appeared to cast doubt on the ex-wives' allegations by tweeting, "Peoples lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation."

On Wednesday, Trump said the words that Democrats and Republicans alike had been listening for: "I am totally opposed to domestic violence and everybody here knows that," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "I am totally opposed to domestic violence of any kind. Everyone knows that, and it almost wouldn't even have to be said. So now you hear it, but you all know it."

The denunciation of domestic violence was greeted with relief by some West Wing aides. But a sense of unease about Kelly's fate persisted.

For months, Kelly — with help from Porter — had established a semblance of stability in a White House often rattled by an unpredictable president. That has eroded in a week's time, as accounts about the handling of the Porter matter continue to shift and some aides come to believe Kelly lied to save face and save his job.

Trump has complained to confidants that Kelly let the scandal spin out of control and that the constantly shifting narratives make the White House — and, by extension, Trump — look amateurish and incompetent, according to one person familiar with the discussions but not authorized to discuss them publicly.

Kelly has indicated he would step aside if he lost the faith of the president. But he has not offered to resign, according to a White House official and an outside adviser. Neither was authorized to discuss personnel matters publicly and spoke only on condition of anonymity.

A number of aides who earlier had rallied around Kelly were dismayed and disillusioned by his handling of the domestic abuse allegations.

Manager: Porn star paid by Trump's lawyer plans to discuss story publicly

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Stormy Daniels, the porn star whom Donald Trump's attorney acknowledges paying \$130,000 just before Election Day, believes she is now free to discuss an alleged sexual encounter with the man who is now president, her manager told The Associated Press.

At the same time, developments in the bizarre case fueled questions about whether such a payment could violate federal cam-

paign finance laws. Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, believes that Trump's personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, invalidated a nondisclosure agreement after two news stories were published Tuesday: one in which Cohen told



Clifford

The New York Times he made the six-figure payment with his personal funds, and another in the Daily Beast, which reported that Cohen was shopping a book proposal that would touch on Daniels' story, said the manager, Gina Rodriguez.

"Everything is off now, and Stormy is going to tell her story," Rodriguez said Wednesday.

At issue is what, exactly, happened inside a Lake Tahoe, Nev., hotel room in 2005 between Trump, then a reality TV star,

and Clifford, who was promoting a porn production company during a celebrity golf tournament. In the years since, Clifford has claimed that she and Trump had sex once and then carried on a subsequent yearslong platonic relationship. But she has also, through a lawyer, denied the two had an affair. Trump's lawyer, Cohen, has denied there was ever an affair.

Rodriguez said her client will soon announce how and when she will tell her story publicly.

NATION

Traffic deaths fall in 2017 after 2-year spike

By TOM KRISHER
Associated Press

DETROIT — Traffic deaths on U.S. roads fell slightly in 2017 after two straight years of big increases, but a leading safety organization that compiled the numbers says it's no cause for celebration.

The National Safety Council on Thursday estimated that 40,100 people were killed in traffic crashes last year, down just less than 1 percent from the 2016 total of 40,327. The group said it's too early to tell whether the small decline means a downward trend after a two-year spike in deaths that was blamed largely on people driving

more miles as the economy improved as well as an increase in distracted driving.

"We're treading water, essentially," said council spokeswoman Maureen Vogel. "We're not making progress. This is the second year in a row we're seeing over 40,000 people killed in this country on the roadways."

Fatalities rose 7 percent in 2016, on top of a 7 percent increase from 2014 to 2015, the steepest two-year increase in over 50 years, according to the council, which gets its data from states. Prior to 2016, annual deaths had not hit 40,000 since 2007, the year before the economy tanked.

Motor vehicle injuries in 2017 also fell

1 percent to an estimated 4.57 million, and the estimated cost of vehicle deaths, injuries and property damage was estimated at \$413.8 billion, also down 1 percent. The number of miles driven last year by Americans grew only 1 percent, easing back from the 3 percent increase in 2016. An estimated 1.25 deaths occurred per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, the council said. That's 2 percent lower than the 2016 rate.

Traffic deaths began dropping in 2008 and reached their lowest point in six decades in 2011 at 32,000. They fluctuated slightly during the next two years, but started climbing in the last quarter of

2014.

Experts say that as the economy recovered, people began driving more, and they also increased riskier behavior such as going out on weekends or taking longer trips on unfamiliar roads. Teens, who have the highest fatal crash rates, also started driving more after the recession, during which many couldn't afford to travel.

The council's fatality estimates differ slightly from those of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The government counts only deaths that occur on public roads, while the council includes fatalities that occur in parking lots and driveways and on private roads.

Report details harm to Cuba diplomats but gives no cause

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
AND JOSH LEDERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Doctors are releasing the first detailed medical reports about the hearing, vision, balance and brain symptoms suffered in what the State Department has called "health attacks" on U.S. diplomats in Cuba. Still missing: A clear diagnosis of just what happened to trigger their mysterious health problems.

Together, the symptoms are similar to the brain dysfunction seen with concussions, concluded a team of specialists from the University of Pennsylvania who tested 21 of the 24 embassy personnel thought to be affected.

Whatever the cause, the Havana patients "experienced persisting disability of a significant nature," the Penn team concluded.

Cuba has insisted there were no attacks. The Journal of the American Medical Association released the report late Wednesday, although key findings first were disclosed by The Associated Press in December.

The mystery began in late 2016 when U.S. Embassy personnel began seeking medical care for hearing loss and ear ringing that they linked to weird noises or vibrations — initially leading investigators



DESMOND BOYLAN/AP

A customer sits at the lobby bar of the Hotel Capri in Havana in September. New, detailed medical reports about mysterious health problems suffered by diplomats in Cuba still do not identify a cause.

to suspect "sonic attacks." Now officials are carefully avoiding that term as doctors involved in the probe wonder whether the sounds were a byproduct of something else that might help explain the full symptom list, including memory problems, impaired concentration, irritability, balance problems and dizziness.

Wednesday's report makes clear that the findings are preliminary, essentially a listing of symptoms and tests. And important complications remain, including that there's no information to compare the patients' brain or hearing before they went to Cuba.

"Before reaching any definitive conclusions, additional evidence must be obtained

and rigorously and objectively evaluated," JAMA associated editor Dr. Christopher Muth cautioned in an accompanying editorial. He noted that many of the symptoms overlap with a list of other neurologic illnesses.

"It really looks like concussion without the history of head trauma," report co-author Dr. Douglas Smith, of Penn's Center for Brain Injury and Repair, said in a podcast provided by JAMA.

He said that sound, heard by 18 of the 21 patients, couldn't be to blame. "There is no known mechanism for audible sound to injure the brain," he said. "We have to suspect that it's a consequence of something else."

Calif. #MeToo advocate faces new claims of misconduct

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia, a vocal #MeToo leader, faces fresh allegations of misconduct in her office, including frequent discussions about sex and alcohol consumption at the Capitol.

San Diego lawyer Dan Gillean filed a formal complaint Wednesday with the Legislature detailing the allegations on behalf of four anonymous former employees in Garcia's office. The complainants allege that Garcia regularly talked about her sexual activity, including with other members, in front of staff. They also allege Garcia drank alcohol while doing official Assembly business and pressured staff to join her in drinking at the office or at bars.

Garcia, in a Facebook post, said she will address each of the issues individually once an investigation has been completed. But she said the claims don't square with the atmosphere she worked to create.

"I am confident I have consistently treated my staff fairly and respectfully," she wrote.

Garcia took a leave of absence last week following news she is being investigated on suspicion of groping a colleague's former staff member, Daniel Pardo, in 2014. The allegations against her marked a stunning twist to the California Legislature's widening sexual harassment scandal that first broke open last fall and prompted two assemblies to resign.

A joint committee, which launched in January in response to allegations of rampant, pervasive harassment at the Legislature, will have its second meeting Thursday and will hear from legal experts to discuss how to create effective policies. The nine-member legislative committee largely has avoided commenting on specific allegations against lawmakers, but its members have offered blistering criticism of a system they say is clearly broken.

Garcia, a Democrat representing southern Los Angeles, has been a vocal leader of the #MeToo movement and a fierce advocate for women's issues.



Garcia

Romney postpones announcement on Senate race

By MICHELLE L. PRICE
AND STEVE PROPLES
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Mitt Romney is preparing to announce a bid for Utah's Senate seat held by retiring Orrin Hatch, a position some hope the 2012 GOP presidential nominee will use to continue his biting criticism of President Donald Trump.

Romney, who once called Trump "a phony" who was unfit for office, is not expected to address the president in an announcement video he has prepared for release online, according to people with direct knowledge of his plans.

Romney had planned to release the video Thursday, they said, but he tweeted Wednesday night that he would not make

an announcement about Utah's Senate race because of the deadly school shooting in Florida. It wasn't clear when he would reschedule his announcement.

Expected to be a heavy favorite to win Hatch's seat, Romney is planning a campaign with a laser-like focus on Utah and will suggest that Washington has much to learn from the state the former Massachusetts governor now calls home, said those with knowledge of his plans.

"I think Mitt's going to make it very clear that he's not running for the Senate because of or in spite of anything to do with Donald Trump," said Spencer Zwick, Romney's former fundraising chief, who now leads fundraising efforts for House Speaker Paul Ryan. "I think Mitt Romney would be running for the Senate whether

Donald Trump was the president or Hillary Clinton was the president."

Romney's small team of longtime advisers plans to maintain a low profile. Having turned down repeated requests for national media appearances in recent days, Romney is carefully designing his campaign launch to avoid media questions about Trump.

Those with knowledge of his plans spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

Romney, one of the most famous Mormons, is widely liked and respected in Utah, which is heavily Mormon.

In addition to his name recognition, Romney has a deep network of fundraisers and his own personal wealth to help carry him.

NATION



PHOTOS BY SETH WENIG/AP

A reporter tries out an interactive surveillance exhibit Monday at SPYSCAPE in New York, where visitors can learn about the elements and history of spying.

New, interactive attraction in Manhattan offers espionage history

By DEEPTI HAJELA
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Hello, recruit. Your mission, should you choose to accept it: Learn about the elements of spying and its history, and find out what kind of spy you could be.

That's the order of the day at SPYSCAPE, a new attraction opening Friday in Manhattan, where visitors can get a glimpse of spying's past and present, from the code-breaking machines of World War II to the most famous names in espionage and their deeds of derring-do or, in some cases, dastardly deception.

Visitors also can take a series of tests that gauge everything from their powers of observation to their willingness to take

risks, to see what spy role they'd be suited for. (Don't worry, there's no secret agency recruiting station at the exit.)

"People are going to come here and find out spies are actually like we are," said Shelby Prichard, chief of staff at SPYSCAPE. "They're probably the closest thing you can get to superheroes in the real world but they're people. With training, with tools, definitely intelligence; but I think at the end of the day we'll all discover we each have our own kinds of spy skills and aptitudes."

The exhibition space is divided into different galleries. They focus on specific areas — encryption, deception, hacking, cyberwarfare, intelligence, surveillance and special ops.

In each of the galleries, visitors can see artifacts related to that area, like an actual Enigma machine used by the Germans to encrypt messages during World War II or masks worn by members of the global hacking group Anonymous, some signed with the code names of the people who wore them.

In the surveillance section, part of the exhibition showcases how tools used by governments also can be used by other organizations by incorporating material from The Associated Press' Pulitzer Prize-winning expose "Seaford from Slaves." The stories traced how fish caught by slave labor in Southeast Asia ended up on American plates.

Reporting it involved using satellite technology to track a cargo ship that was moving the seaford caught by the enslaved men, as well as surveillance of the fish as it was offloaded and moved to other facilities. The exhibit at SPYSCAPE features the tools of the trade like a reporter's notebook and laptop, as well as video from the journalists involved.

"We're really focused on showing how



Guy Fawkes masks, often associated with the hacker group Anonymous, are displayed Monday in a section about hacking at SPYSCAPE.

every person uses spy skills in everyday life," Prichard said.

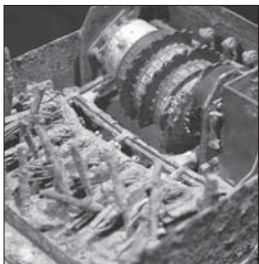
The exhibits don't just focus on the past, either — there's a segment talking about messaging programs like WhatsApp and how long messages on it will remain encrypted, as well as an area offering tips on how to limit your cyberspace exposure. An art exhibit is made up of video cameras representing some of the most well-known and widely used social media sites, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The interactive tests that visitors can take to build up their profiles are varied. In one section, they're asked to answer logic puzzles to rate their IQ, while in the decep-

tion section they're taught about different physical signs of lying and asked to determine whether someone being questioned is being truthful or not. In the surveillance section, they have a set amount of time to look at a range of screens and answer questions about what they're seeing.

The most physical interactive exhibit is the Special Ops area, where people take a run through a laser beam maze and try to hit targets along the way.

Advisers and consultants for SPYSCAPE, which was several years in the making, included former spies and members of intelligence agencies as well as hackers-turned-security consultants.



A World War II-era Enigma machine destroyed by German troops in the field is displayed Monday at SPYSCAPE. Visitors to the new attraction, which opens Friday, can find out what kind of spies they could be.

NATION

Dems, FBI negotiate on memo's classified info

By Tom LoBianco

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee said Wednesday that he is continuing to negotiate with the FBI over the release of a memo packed with classified information from secret surveillance applications, but remains unsure if the White House will attempt to block its release.

Democrats argue their memo, with as-yet-undisclosed details used to win court approval to listen in on a former adviser to the campaign of President Donald Trump, would rebut a Republican memo released two weeks ago. Trump has said the GOP memo proves his campaign was the target of a politically motivated spying operation.

"What I don't know is what authority the FBI and (Justice Department) has been given. When we reach an agreement with the FBI, is that the end of the matter, or will the White House use a veto?" Rep. Adam Schiff said at The Christian Science Monitor Breakfast.



Schiff

Ty Cobb, the lawyer coordinating the White House's response to the special counsel's Russia inquiry, rebutted Schiff's accusation, flatly saying "No." White House counsel Don McGahn wrote the letter last Friday seeking more redactions from the Democratic memo, and it was not immediately clear Thursday afternoon whether McGahn agreed with Cobb.

Schiff and Democratic staff have been talking with the FBI about what portions of their memo to redact after the White House last week announced it would not approve its release without significant redactions. Democrats have argued the memo would prove that the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrant approved for Carter Page used credible evidence, and not just allegations contained in

the "Steele Dossier," which was bankrolled in part by a lawyer working for the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton and the Democratic National Committee. Schiff noted Wednesday that the memo includes classified details from four FISA applications on Page — the original request filed in October 2016 and three subsequent renewals.

The Justice Department previously had responded to public records requests on government surveillance of Trump associates by refusing to confirm or deny that any such records existed — known in the law as a Glomar response.

But in a court filing Wednesday, the department acknowledged the existence of the Republican memo and the facts it revealed. It withdrew its Glomar response with respect to the surveillance of Page and confirmed that the first FISA warrant for him was obtained after he had left the Trump campaign.

A broad swath of Republicans also have said releasing the Democratic memo would be good for the president, practically and

politically — they say it will not detract from allegations that the Obama-era Justice Department spied on Trump's campaign to help Hillary Clinton.

"He was right to release the (Republican) memo, and I think it's been vindicated by Sen. (Chuck) Grassley and a few others. And he should release the Democratic memo," said Newt Gingrich, an informal Trump adviser, outside the White House.

Roger Stone, a veteran Trump confidant, said Trump should support releasing the Democratic memo. But he derided the Democrats' version as "contrived, ridiculous and a pathetic attempt to obscure the fact that the Democrats still have no evidence what-

soever of collusion."

Schiff rebuffed that argument, saying that plea deals from former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn and former Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos are part of a broad pattern of collusion that has been revealed publicly.

"I can tell you one thing, if this were a trial on the issue of 'did the Trump campaign conspire with the Russians to interfere or violate U.S. election laws by providing help to the Trump campaign?' If this were a trial on that conspiracy charge, the charge would be conspiracy. All of that evidence would come in as evidence of collusion," Schiff said.

Trump said to support higher fuel taxes

By Ken Thomas

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday signaled his openness to a 25-cent fuel tax increase to help pay for his infrastructure proposal.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., said Trump told lawmakers in a White House meeting that he would be willing to provide leadership on such an increase.

"To my surprise, President Trump, today in our meeting, offered his support for raising the gas and diesel tax by 25 cents a gallon and dedicating that money to improve our roads, highways, and bridges," said Carper, who

has advocated for the increase, in a statement.

He said the president "came back to the idea of a 25-cent increase several times throughout the meeting."

Trump made the comments, first reported by Axios, in a meeting with members of the House and the Senate to discuss his plan to rebuild and restore the nation's roads, bridges and ports. The White House unveiled a proposal Monday to use a \$200 billion federal investment to leverage more than \$1 trillion in public and private funding to pay for the upgrades.

The White House proposal is silent on what the administration

would do about the Highway Trust Fund, which finances most highway and transit projects through the fuel taxes. The trust fund is forecast to go broke in 2021.

Some lawmakers and prominent groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have called for a 25-cent, phased-in increase in the federal gas tax to bolster the nation's highway trust fund. But any tax increase would represent a political risk for members of Congress in an election year.

Trump said during the meeting he believed Republicans and Democrats could "find common ground" on infrastructure, adding, "We'll see how it all turns out."

Happy 60th Birthday



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WORLD

Ramaphosa elected as S. African president

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — Cyril Ramaphosa on Thursday was elected as South Africa's new president by ruling-party legislators after the resignation of Jacob Zuma, whose scandals brought the storied African National Congress to its weakest point since taking power at the end of apartheid.

Ramaphosa was the only candidate nominated for election in the parliament after two opposition parties said they would not participate.

The opposition parties instead unsuccessfully called for the dissolution of the National Assembly and early elections.

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng pre-

sided over the parliamentary election and congratulated Ramaphosa, who had been Zuma's deputy and has called for a fight against corruption.

Zuma resigned after years of scandals that damaged the stature of the ruling ANC party, which had instructed him this week to step down or face a parliamentary motion of no confidence that he almost certainly would lose. Zuma denies any wrongdoing.

Ramaphosa is South Africa's fifth president since majority rule started after the end of apartheid in 1994. On Friday evening, he is expected to deliver the state of the nation address that had been postponed during the ruling party's days of closed-door negotiations to persuade Zuma

to resign.

As some South Africans cheered the end of Zuma's era, the rand currency strengthened against the dollar in early trading Thursday.

The opposition Democratic Alliance party will cooperate with Ramaphosa if he acts in the interests of the South African people, said party leader Mmusi Maimane. "We will hold you accountable and I will see you in 2019 on the ballot box," Maimane said.

Members of a smaller opposition party walked out of parliament before the election, saying the ruling ANC party's plan to choose a new president was "illegitimate."

Julius Malema, leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters party, said ANC law-

makers had failed to hold Zuma to account for suspected corruption and therefore had violated the constitution.

On Thursday, South Africa's first black president, welcomed Zuma's departure but said the state must act against "networks of criminality" that have hurt the country's democracy.

As the country marks the centenary of Mandela's 1918 birth, "there is a need to reckon with the failures of the democratic era," the foundation said.

"We believe that we are at a critical moment in our history, one which offers us the unique opportunity to reflect, to rebuild and to transform."



EFREN LUKATSKY/AP

Remembering another Afghanistan war

People pray and lay flowers Thursday in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, at a monument to soldiers killed in Afghanistan in the 1979-89 war to mark the anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country. The last detachment of the Soviet army left Afghanistan on Feb. 15, 1989, after waging a 10-year war in a failed attempt to impose Soviet rule in the country. Some 3,360 Ukrainian soldiers were killed in the war.

Duterte offers kill bounty for rebels to save on war costs

By JIM GOMEZ
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine president offered a nearly \$500 bounty for each communist rebel killed by government forces to save on anti-insurgency costs and said insurgents are easier to hit than birds because they have bigger heads.

President Rodrigo Duterte's latest crass remarks, which the government issued to reporters late Wednesday, came after human rights groups condemned him this week for saying troops should shoot female communist guerrillas in the genitals to render them "useless."

"You kill an NPA today and I'll

pay you 25,000" pesos, Duterte said in a speech at an air base in central Cebu city, referring to New People's Army guerrillas.

"I was computing that if this drags on for four years ... it'll be very expensive because it's war. If I'll just pay 25,000 for a life, I can save about 47 percent," he said to laughter from the crowd.

There was no elaboration on how he came up with those figures and whether or how the government would pay for claimed kills. Backing up his offer, the brash-talking president encouraged state forces to go for the kill.

"If you work really hard to crawl across the forest, you'll surely be able to shoot even just one. If you

can shoot a bird above you, then how much more an NPA, whose head is so big?" Duterte said, often eliciting laughter from the crowd.

Regional rebel commander Jaime Padilla, who uses the nom de guerre Ka Diego, said Duterte wouldn't scare the guerrillas into ending their uprising even if he offers a million pesos for each rebel killed because the rebellion has been fueled by deep social ills, such as poverty, for nearly a century.

"These are not remarks of a sane president," Padilla said by telephone. "These are words of a thug or a goon, who reigns like a king in our country."

Tillerson wades into Lebanon-Israel border dispute

By ANDREA ROSA
AND PHILIP ISSA
Associated Press

BEIRUT — U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Thursday said he had positive discussions in Lebanon on how to break a "stalemate" with Israel over gas drilling rights along the countries' disputed maritime border and to maintain calm along the volatile frontier.

Tillerson was in Lebanon on a brief stopover amid a growing dispute between Lebanon and its southern neighbor, Israel, over oil and gas reserves, and Israel's construction of a border wall that Lebanon says encroaches on its territory. The U.S. has been trying to mediate in the dispute, and Tillerson suggested Israel should stop building a border wall until the border between the two countries is agreed on.

"We've asked no one to give up anything. Rather, we're looking for a solution," Tillerson told reporters at a joint news conference with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri in Beirut.

He also called on the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia to cease its activities abroad to help reduce tensions in the region.

"Hezbollah's presence in Syria has only perpetuated the bloodshed, increased the displacement of innocent people and propped up the barbaric Assad regime," Tillerson said at the news conference with Hariri, a western ally whose coalition government includes the group.

"Their presence in Iraq and Yemen has also fueled violence. And the consequences of Hezbollah's involvement in these far-off conflicts — which have nothing to do with Lebanon — are felt here."

Earlier Thursday, Tillerson met with key allies of Hezbollah, including Presidents Michel Aoun, Fouad Siniora, Gibran Bassil and Parliament Speaker Nabih

Berri.

Aoun, who kept Tillerson waiting for several minutes at the palace ahead of their meeting, said he asked Tillerson to work on preventing what he said were ongoing Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty and said Lebanon rejects Israeli claims over parts of the countries' maritime border.

The Lebanese presidency denied there was any departure from protocol. Rafik Chalala, who heads Aoun's media office, said Tillerson had arrived a few minutes earlier than expected and that the meeting began on time. He pointed to Tillerson's comments he left in the guest book in which he thanked the presidency for the "warm welcome."

At his meeting with Berri, a pro-Hezbollah politician, one of the photographers asked the men to shake hands. Berri laughed and said, "Why do you need that?"

They then looked at each other, chuckled and obliged.

Tillerson, who arrived in Beirut from neighboring Jordan, is the most senior official from the Trump administration to visit Lebanon. His visit was the first by a U.S. secretary of state in four years.

Israel recently has escalated its threats over Lebanon's invitation for offshore gas exploration bids along the countries' maritime border, claiming that Lebanon will be drilling in areas owned by Israel. Lebanese officials deny the Israeli statements, saying the area where the country plans to drill belongs to Lebanon.

The long-standing dispute surfaced recently as Lebanon signed a deal with an international consortium to start exploratory offshore drilling next year.

Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman described the exploration tender as "provocative" and suggested Lebanon had put out invitations for bids from international groups for a gas field "which is by all accounts ours."

INDEPENDENT NEWS FOR THE U.S. MILITARY COMMUNITY

Whenever They Fight and Wherever They Live

The first Stars and Stripes was printed during the Civil War, when a band of Union soldiers published a handful of editions.

During World War I, Stars and Stripes reappeared in Paris on February 8, 1918, to serve the doughboys of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), by order of General of the Armies John J. Pershing. An all-military staff produced it weekly until the war's end.

A second renaissance began on April 18, 1942, when a small group of servicemen began publishing a four-page weekly Stars and Stripes in London. They sold each copy for "tuppence" (about 5 cents) and in no time doubled their page count to eight pages, printing daily instead of weekly.

The first World War II edition of Stars and Stripes featured an interview with Gen. George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff. Marshall quoted Gen. Pershing, World War I Commander of the AEF, who described Stripes as a major factor in sustaining morale. Stars and Stripes later found a champion and protector in Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander and later president of the United States.

Eisenhower enforced a hands-off policy in regard to Stars and Stripes that continues to the present day.

Operations expanded, following GIs to the battlefield to bring them the news. During the war, Stars and Stripes published over 30

separate editions, running up to 24 pages per issue.

At one time, Stars and Stripes had some 25 printing locations in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific. The Pacific edition was launched a week after VE day (Victory in Europe, May 8, 1945).

The war ended—but Stars and Stripes kept going. Its reporters and photographers continued to join American troops in the field, throughout the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, during the 1990s Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and in Bosnia and Kosovo.

From the 2003 outset of Operation Enduring Freedom, Stars and Stripes was there to report first-hand. The war in Afghanistan continues to receive steady coverage. And during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Stripes reporters embedded with military units in Kuwait and Iraq, as well as on Navy ships in the region.

Stars and Stripes today is a multimedia news organization. The majority of Stars and Stripes unique reporting efforts is read now in digital form, either online at stripes.com or via mobile offerings for iPhone, Android and iPad, in over 200 countries around the world.

The print newspaper is still available for servicemembers, government civilians and their families in

Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific—and in contingency areas. Washington, D.C., hosts the Central office, where daily editions are transmitted to printers in Afghanistan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Djibouti, as well as in Germany, Italy, UK, Japan, and South Korea. Stars and Stripes also publishes several weeklies (Stripes Guam, Japan, Korea and Okinawa), designed to serve the

needs of their respective military communities.

A U.S. edition comprised exclusively of Stars and Stripes reports from around the world now serves stateside forces and veterans. The U.S. edition is published in partnership with commercial newspaper publishers who serve communities with large military populations.



STARS AND STRIPES RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

2015 Columbia Journalism School Dart Awards

Feature Story Reporting
(Daily Circulation 1,500,000)
Finalist: Martin Kuz, "Army Sgt. Isaac Sims left the war in Iraq, but it didn't leave him"

2014 Sigma Delta Chi Award – Feature Story Reporting

(Daily Circulation 1,500,000)
Recipient: Martin Kuz, "Death shapes life for teens that prepare bodies of fallen troops for final flight home"

2014 VFW News Media Award

For outstanding contribution to a better understanding of our American way of life and its institutions and interests by honest and forthright reporting.

2013 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Notable Narrative Winner
Recipient: Laura Rauch

2013 Best American Newspaper Narrative Writing Contest

Notable Narrative Winner
Recipient: Martin Kuz, "Soldiers Recount Attack"

2013 National Headline Awards

Second Place: News Series
(Former Alter: A Warrior Wounded; A Family Challenged)

2011 Military Photographer of the Year

Honorable Mention
Recipient: Joshua DeMott

2011 Sigma Delta Chi Award

Breaking News Photography
(Newspaper Circulation 100,001+ or Affiliated Website/National Magazine) Recipient: Laura Rauch, "For those I love I will sacrifice"

2011 John Reagan "Tex" McCrary Award for Excellence in Journalism

Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation

2010 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Awards – Overseas coverage
(< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Jon Barloff

2010 National Headline Awards

First Place: Public Service (Forcing Change) – Third Place: News Series (Coming Home: The Men of Triple Deuce)

2009 George Polk Awards in Journalism

George Polk Award for Military Reporting
Recipients: Charles Reed, Leo Shane III and Kevin Baron

2007 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Monte Morin

2006 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipients: Monte Morin, Joe Giordano; Honorable mention: Nancy Montgomery Photography; Fred Zimmerman

2005 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Steve Lewis Photography; Terry Boyd

2004 American Legion Excellence in Journalism Award

Ground Truth Series

2003 Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award

First Amendment, Finalist

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man mistakenly texts officer about death

FL DUNNELLON — A Florida man was charged with murder after telling authorities he meant to text his wife about the death of his live-in girlfriend but nervously messaged a detective instead.

Marion County Sheriff's officials arrested David W. Romig, 52, Tuesday.

Investigators said he staged the crime scene to make it look like an intruder entered the Dunnellon home Jan. 30 and killed Sally Kaufmann-Ruff, 64.

The Ocala Star-Banner reported detectives found evidence that didn't match Romig's story about the home invasion.

Police pursuit of stolen school bus hits 100 mph

OH DAYTON — Authorities say speeds reached 100 mph during a police pursuit of a stolen school bus in southwest Ohio.

The Dayton Daily News reported a chase began shortly before 3 a.m. Wednesday. The bus had been stolen from the Twin Valley schools in West Alexandria, about 19 miles west of Dayton.

The chase began in Brookville, northwest of Dayton. The bus struck a parked car during the chase, which ended in the Dayton suburb of Trotwood. A suspect was arrested.

Taco Bell run leads to driver's arrest for DUI

OR PORTLAND — A Medford woman was arrested on suspicion of drunken driving after authorities said she struck garbage cans and drove into a ditch during a Taco Bell run.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported the 39-year-old woman left her home Tuesday morning to travel to a Taco Bell about 6 miles away. The Jackson County Sheriff's Office said she began hitting garbage cans and nearly struck an elderly couple while she was driving home.

Authorities said she then drove into a ditch near her home and bystanders forced her to stop.

Authorities said she had a blood alcohol level of 0.55 percent and was taken to the hospital for treatment. The legal limit in Oregon is 0.08 percent.

Woman: Mayor offered speed bumps for sex

FL LANTANA — A woman accused the mayor of a Florida town of promising to get speed bumps put on streets in her neighborhood in exchange for sex.

In a complaint filed Jan. 2 with the Florida Commission on Ethics, Catherine Padilla said she had asked the town to install speed bumps as a safety measure.

She said Lantana Mayor David Stewart drove her to a motel after having lunch three years ago and said he wanted to have sex with her. She refused, but said he asked her again before the August 2015 vote, which was approved.

Stewart denied the allegations.

THE CENSUS

23

The number of stores shut down in Murfreesboro, Tenn., after they were accused of selling marijuana candy. Authorities indicted 21 people for selling the candy and other products containing cannabidiol, a derivative of cannabis. News outlets reported that "Operation Candy Crush" was launched after Rutherford County Sheriff Mike Fitzhugh said parents said their child brought the CBD-laced candy home.



GREG EANS, THE (OWENSBORO, KY.) MESSENGER-INQUIRER/AP

Curling up with a good book

From left, Sidney Bennett, 6; Briley Ewing, 6; and Kylie Bozarth, 7, read their favorite books in Lisa Gallagher's first-grade classroom while participating in "I Love to Read Day" at Meadow Lands Elementary School in Owensboro, Ky., on Wednesday. Students and staff members at Daviess County Public Schools dressed up as book characters and brought pillows, blankets and stuffed animals with them to school to spend time reading with friends while participating in one of several "I Love to Read!" events throughout February.

Teen calls 911 from car to report drunken driver

NE OMAHA — Omaha police said they arrested a 32-year-old man suspected of driving drunk with five children in his vehicle after one of the kids called 911.

Omaha television station KETV reported that a 14-year-old boy — the driver's nephew — inside the car called 911 around noon Sunday. Police said that when officers stopped the vehicle, they found the children — ranging in age from 12 to 15 — crying and the driver showing clear signs of intoxication.

The driver was charged with DUI, five counts of child neglect and not having a driver's license or registration.

Man with 'Dirtbag' plate arrested at car wash

WA BELLEVUE — Authorities said a Washington man with a custom

"DIRTBAG" license plate on his car was arrested after purposely rear-ending a driver at a car wash and punching an officer.

Court documents said the man — upset the driver ahead of him wasn't moving faster — bumped the car in front of him Sunday with his Chevy Camaro.

Police said the driver of the car that was stuck began taking photos of the damage to his car with his cellphone. Police said that's when the driver of the Camaro got out of his car and pointed a gun at the other man.

Police said the driver of the Camaro refused to get out of the car when police arrived, then punched an officer in the face while being taken into custody.

Woman accused of tying boys to basement pole

MN HASTINGS — A Minnesota woman faces felony charges for allegedly punishing her grandnephew and his brother by tying them to a pole in her basement.

Flor Estella Gallegos, 53, of South St. Paul is charged with false imprisonment of a child and malicious punishment of a child in Dakota County in 2017.

The criminal complaint accuses Gallegos of withholding food, striking the boys and binding them to a pole or furniture overnight.

Fraudster convicted of scamming again

MD ROCKVILLE — A Maryland woman who claims to be a psychic has been convicted of scamming people — again.

WRC-TV reported Gina Marie Marks, who worked under the name Natalie Miller, pleaded guilty last week to multiple counts of felony theft for stealing \$340,000 from five people who sought help with their troubles.

Police learned of Marks in 2016 when a woman paid Marks for love spells but got suspicious when the charges began approaching \$80,000.

Marks was arrested at the

Miami International Airport in Florida and faces up to six years in prison.

Woman tells police she's Mother Mary

KY ELIZABETHTOWN — A woman who led police on a chase told arresting officers that she was Mother Mary en route to pick up Baby Jesus and had permission from God to speed.

WDRB-TV cited an arrest report saying a Kentucky trooper attempted to pull over Connie Allen, 52, of Tennessee on Saturday but she ignored him. A high-speed chase ensued.

Another trooper was eventually able to pull in front of Allen, forcing her to stop. He approached her car with his weapon drawn, but she refused to get out and show her hands. The report said she became compliant when he hit her window with a police baton.

She also told police she had died five years ago.

From wire reports



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BUSINESS/WEATHER

McDonald's banishing cheeseburgers in Happy Meal

By JOSEPH PISANI
Associated Press

NEW YORK — McDonald's will soon banish cheeseburgers and chocolate milk from its Happy Meal menu in an effort to cut down on the calories, sodium, saturated fat and sugar that kids consume at its restaurants.

Diners can still ask specifically for cheeseburgers or chocolate milk with the kids' meal, but the fast-food company said that not listing them will reduce how often they're ordered. Since

it removed soda from the Happy Meal menu four years ago, orders for it with Happy Meals have fallen 14 percent, the company said.

The Happy Meal has long been a target of health advocates and parents who link it to childhood obesity. McDonald's has made many tweaks over the years, including cutting the size of its fries and adding fruit. Most recently, it swapped out apple juice for one that has less sugar.

It's been especially important as the company tries to shake its

junk-food image, since McDonald's is known for getting more business from families with children relative to its traditional rivals, such as Burger King and Wendy's. The Happy Meal is a key part of that.

The latest changes will occur in the United States by June.

McDonald's said Thursday that it wants all its Happy Meal options to have 600 calories or fewer and have less than 650 milligrams of sodium. It also wants less than 10 percent of the meal's calories to come from saturated

fat and added sugar.

The cheeseburger and chocolate milk didn't meet those new standards, the Oak Brook, Ill.-based company said. It is, however, working to cut sugar from the chocolate milk and believes it will be eventually on the Happy Meal menu but doesn't know when that will happen.

There will be other tweaks. The six-piece chicken nugget Happy Meal will now come with a kids-sized fries instead of a small, lowering calories and sodium from the fries by half. Bottled water

will be added as an option to the Happy Meal menu, but will cost extra. Currently, the Happy Meal menu lists milk, chocolate milk and apple juice. Soda does not cost extra.

For international restaurants, McDonald's Corp. said that at least half of the Happy Meal options available must meet its new nutritional guidelines. The company said some are adding new menu items to comply, like in Italy, where a grilled chicken sandwich was added to the Happy Meal menu.

Uber CEO aims to cut losses, get 'the love back'

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AND TOM KRISHER
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi is focused on cutting the company's massive losses and "getting the love back" after a year of damaging revelations about the ride-hailing service's treatment of its employees, drivers, regulators and rivals.

Khosrowshahi, who left online travel agency Expedia for Uber five months ago, inherited a mess after Uber acknowledged rampant sexual harassment and its use of duplicitous software to thwart government regulators while deal-

ing with the fallout from a video that captured Uber co-founder and then CEO Travis Kalanick berating one of its own drivers.

To make matters worse, Khosrowshahi discovered that Uber had covered up a computer break-in that stole personal information about millions of riders and drivers. He also landed in the midst of a court battle that pitted Uber against a Google spinoff alleging that the ride-hailing service had conspired to steal its self-driving car technology.

Uber last week agreed to pay \$245 million to settle the trade secrets case brought by Waymo, the company spawned by a self-driving car project started by Google.

Uber lost \$4.5 billion in 2017, widening from a \$2.8 billion setback in the previous year. The results released earlier this week showed Uber pared its fourth-quarter loss by 25 percent from the third quarter.

Uber's share of the ride-hailing market in the U.S. fell from 82 percent at the start of last year to 70 percent in the fourth quarter.

Those numbers underscore Uber's tenuous position despite its pioneering role in the ride-hailing industry that enabled it to build a lead over rivals, said Stephen Beck, managing partner of *cg24*, a management consulting firm. "Their app is just a download away from people moving on to a competitor," he said.

EUROPE GAS PRICES				
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.896	\$3.177	\$3.414	\$3.352
Change in price	-3.0 cents	-2.6 cents	-2.4 cents	-2.3 cents
Netherlands	--	\$3.577	\$3.728	\$3.604
Change in price	--	-13.2 cents	-12.9 cents	-15.5 cents
U.K.	--	\$3.122	\$3.359	\$3.297
Change in price	--	-2.6 cents	-2.4 cents	-2.3 cents
Azores	--	--	\$3.357	--
Change in price	--	--	-2.4 cents	--
Belgium	--	\$2.784	\$3.028	\$2.984
Change in price	--	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	--	--	\$3.235	\$3.173*
Change in price	--	--	-2.4 cents	-2.3 cents
Italy	\$3.974	--	--	\$4.012
Change in price	No change	--	--	No change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES				
Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	--	\$3.159	--	\$3.099
Change in price	--	-2.0 cents	--	-2.0 cents
Okunawa	\$2.639	--	--	\$3.099
Change in price	-3.0 cents	--	--	-2.0 cents
South Korea	\$2.679	\$2.959	\$3.189	\$3.129
Change in price	-3.0 cents	-2.0 cents	-3.0 cents	-3.0 cents
Guam	\$2.669**	\$2.949	\$3.189	--
Change in price	-3.0 cents	-3.0 cents	-3.0 cents	--

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Feb. 17-23

MARKET WATCH	
Feb. 14, 2018	
Dow Jones Industrials	253.04
	24,893.49
Nasdaq composite	130.10
	7,143.62
Standard & Poor's 500	35.69
	2,698.63
Russell 2000	27.15
	1,522.10

EXCHANGE RATES	
Military rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 16)	\$1.2811
Dollar buys (Feb. 16)	€0.7806
British pound (Feb. 16)	\$1.44
Japanese yen (Feb. 16)	¥105.00
South Korean won (Feb. 16)	₩1,056.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
Brunei (Dollar)	\$1.4093
Canada (Dollar)	1.2495
China (Yuan)	6.3438
Denmark (Krone)	5.9602
Egypt (Pound)	£17.01
Hong Kong (Dollar)	\$1.2499/0.8001
Hong Kong (Dollar)	1.2807
Hungary (Forint)	249.38
Israel (Shekel)	3.5256
Japan (Yen)	106.35
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2994
Norway (Krone)	7.9712
Philippines (Peso)	52.22
Poland (Zloty)	3.33
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7495
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3109
South Korea (Won)	1,065.02
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9230
Thailand (Baht)	31.26
Turkey (Lira)	7.6797

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany, check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

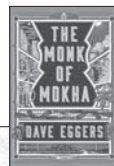
INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	4.50
Discount rate	2.00
Federal funds market rate	4.42
3-month bill	1.59
30-year bond	3.13

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

WEEKEND



Eggers tells compelling tale about Yemeni coffee
Books, Page 38



HEROIC EFFORT

'Black Panther' star Chadwick Boseman and director Ryan Coogler take blockbusters to Africa — and the future. Along with the film's powerhouse cast, they present a bold vision of Afrofuturism's potential at the multiplex.

Pages 24-25

WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS



Apple Music keeps growing

BY SEUNG LEE
The Mercury News

In the race for global music streaming supremacy, the gap between Spotify and Apple Music is getting smaller.

Apple Music is growing its American subscriber base at a faster rate than Sweden-based Spotify and may usurp Spotify as the most popular music streaming service as soon as this summer, the Wall Street Journal reports.

But globally, Apple Music still has a long way to go. Spotify has more than 70 million global subscribers, whereas Apple Music tumbled to the Wall Street Journal it now has 36 million subscribers — up from 30 million in September.

Apple Music — which comes preloaded on all Apple devices — has been growing at 5 percent in subscribers in the United States every month. Spotify, in contrast, has a 2 percent monthly subscriber growth rate, according to the Wall Street Journal.

When accounting for users who listen to either service for free during a trial period, Apple Music already has a slight lead over Spotify, reports the Journal. Both Apple Music and Spotify offer a trial period before their regular individual subscription models, priced at \$9.99 a month. Apple Music's trial period lasts three months, while Spotify's is 30 days.

Apple Music has three to four times more users in the trial period than Spotify, boosting its overall listenership numbers in the United States past Spotify.

Streaming services have soared in the past five years as the largest revenue generator for the music industry, as CD sales and album and song downloads declined. In 2011, streaming services accounted for \$650 million in revenue; five years later, streaming generated \$3.93 billion, larger than CD sales and downloads combined.

However, music streaming services have struggled to turn the popularity into profit. Spotify, which is expected to have its long-awaited IPO this spring, has never reported a profit. Pandora, an Oakland, Calif.-based service that predates Spotify, has severely struggled; its founder and CEO Tim Westergren stepped down from the company last June but a new regime has yet to overturn its depressing share prices.

It is unclear if Apple is making a profit from Apple Music, but the Cupertino, Calif., tech giant regularly touts its “services” — an umbrella term to describe all Apple-owned software platforms such as iCloud, App Store, Apple Pay and Apple Music — and their consistently high growth year over year. In its last earnings report released recently, Apple reported its services sector grew 18 percent from a year ago to \$8.47 billion.

Apple Music also will have a hardware companion to help boost its numbers: the HomePod. Apple's new \$349 smart home speaker has been advertised as the home speaker with superior sound quality over its competitors, which include Amazon Echo and Google Home.

ON THE COVER: From top, Chadwick Boseman, Michael B. Jordan and Lupita Nyong'o star in “Black Panther.”

Illustration by Sean Moores/Stars and Stripes; photos by Marvel Studios-Disney

GADGET WATCH



TIMERCAP.COM/TNS

The iSort is a Bluetooth-enabled seven-day pill box that works with an app to help patients and caregivers keep track of when and whether medication has been taken.

Never miss a dose with smart pillbox

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

The iSort is a new TimerCap Bluetooth-enabled seven-day pillbox that sends reminders to an app on a mobile device (iOS and Android) reminding patients and caregivers when to take the medication or even when a dosage has been missed.

The TimeCap app records when the doors of the pillbox are opened and closed, so there's no mistaking when the medication has been taken. This not only keeps the patient on a set schedule but also eliminates the guessing game of whether a medication has been taken or not and when.

You can combine multiple prescriptions since the on-board memory retains history of dosing intervals even when the battery-operated iSort is away from the paired mobile device.

Caregiver notifications let them know if the medications are being dispensed on schedule with exactly what and how many meds are to be taken.

You can pair up to six devices with the iSort, which has red and green built-in LED indicators.

The iSort measures 1 1/2-by-9-by-2 1/2 inches, weighs 6 ounces and is built with a magnetic latch.

Online: timercap.com; \$89.95

Fingerprints have long replaced combinations for touchscreen devices, and now finding a key or remembering a combination for the Taplock padlock is not an issue, assuming that your fingerprint has been registered to the lock.

When you want the lock unlocked, just put one of the stored fingerprints on the front-facing sensor, and the lock unlocks instantly.

The smart lock is built with sensors to store

up to 500 fingerprints, so multiple users will not be an issue. Inside the lock is a state-of-the-art capacitive fingerprint sensor, with an adaptive algorithm enabling the lock to become faster and more accurate with each use.

The Taplock app (iOS and Android) keeps track of when and by whom the lock was opened, and you can even provide access to have it unlocked with the remote feature. The app shows how much power remains in the internal rechargeable battery, which is good for up to a year or about 3,000 unlocks.

It has a rugged construction with Zamak 3 zinc alloy metal, and a cut-resistant 7mm reinforced stainless steel shackle, strengthened by a double-layered lock design with anti-shim and anti-pick technologies, according to Taplock. You can use the lock inside or out with its IP66 rating, giving it full functionality between 14 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

Online: taplock.com; \$99 each or a bundled pair for \$179, available in gunmetal, midnight black and sterling silver

With USB-C still new and unknown to many, Satechi has a solution to make the transition simple.

The USB-C Clamp Hub

Pro has a brushed aluminum design for Apple enthusiasts and specifically the 2017 iMac and iMac Pro.

Within the 4.63-by-1.31-by-0.44-inch hub are a single USB-C port (data only), a MicroSD, a full-size SD memory card reader and 3 USB 3.0 ports.

Online: satechi.net; \$49.99, available in silver and space gray

The USB-C Clamp Hub Pro

Satechi TNS

ITUNES MUSIC

The top 10 songs on iTunes for the week ending Feb. 8:

1. “God’s Plan,” Drake
2. “Pray For Me” (with Kendrick Lamar), The Weeknd
3. “Say Something” (feat. Chris Stapleton), Justin Timberlake
4. “The Champion” (feat. Ludacris), Carrie Underwood
5. “Perfect,” Ed Sheeran
6. “Fillyty,” Justin Timberlake
7. “Want to Be” (feat. Florida Georgia Line), Bebe Rexha
8. “Finesse” (Remix, feat. Cardi B), Bruno Mars
9. “Havana” (feat. Young Thug), Camila Cabello
10. “The Middle,” Zedd, Maren Morris & Grey

— Compiled by AP

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The top 10 songs on Spotify for the week ending Feb. 13:

1. “God’s Plan,” Drake
2. “All the Stars” (with SZA), Kendrick Lamar
3. “Pray for Me” (with Kendrick Lamar), The Weeknd
4. “rockstar” (feat. 21 Savage), Post Malone
5. “IDGAF,” Dua Lipa
6. “Mine,” Bazzi
7. “Havana” (feat. Young Thug), Camila Cabello
8. “Finesse” (Remix, feat. Cardi B), Bruno Mars
9. “Look Alive” (feat. Drake), Blacboy JB
10. “River” (feat. Ed Sheeran), Eminem

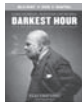
— Compiled by Stars and Stripes

ITUNES MOVIES BOOKS

The top 10 movies on iTunes for the week ending Feb. 11:

1. “Darkest Hour”
2. “A Bad Moms Christmas”
3. “Only the Brave”
4. “Daddy’s Home 2”
5. “Braven”
6. “Blade Runner 2049”
7. “The Florida Project”
8. “My Friend Dahmer”
9. “American Made”
10. “Wonder”

— Compiled by AP



BOOKS

The top 10 books on the eBook charts for the week ending Feb. 11:

1. “The Wife Between Us,” Greer Hendricks & Sarah Pekkanen
2. “The Woman in the Window,” A.J. Finn
3. “The Great Alone,” Kristin Hannah
4. “Darker,” E.J. Lang
5. “An American Marriage,” Tayari Jones
6. “Look for Me,” Lisa Gardner
7. “Little Fires Everywhere,” Celeste Ng
8. “Code to Zero,” Ken Follett
9. “Still Me,” Jojo Moyes
10. “Origin,” Dan Brown

— Compiled by AP

APPS

The top paid iPhone apps for the week ending Feb. 11:

1. Minecraft
2. Pocket Build
3. Heads Up!
4. Plague Inc.
5. HYPERPEKTIV
6. Bloons TD 5
7. Geometry Dash
8. Facelife
9. Schedule
10. NBA 2K18, 2K

— Compiled by AP

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1 'Mrs. Maisel' truly marvelous

Fans of whip-smart comedy can add another must-see show to their lists. "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," about a housewife who finds she has a gift for stand-up comedy after her husband informs her he's leaving her for his ditzzy secretary, is the latest brainchild from "Gilmore Girls" creator Amy Sherman-Palladino. The show is set in 1950s Manhattan and stars the adorable Rachel Brosnahan, who has snapped up award after award for her snappy portrayal of newly adrift Midge Maisel. The sets and clothing add to the show's sense of glam, but it has none of the negativity of, say, fellow period piece

"Mad Men." Indeed, one of its greatest charms is that "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" never forgets that it's a comedic drama about the gift of being funny.

Costars include Tony Shalhoub, who plays Midge's father and isn't eager to see her move back in, and Jane Lynch, who plays a successful comedian with a surprising secret in the seventh episode. Amazon has already ordered a second season of the show, so don't be afraid to get hooked on the first eight gorgeous, hilarious episodes: More is to come.

• **Series premiere of 'The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel' airs Tuesday on AFN-Spectrum.**



Amazon Prime

Rachel Brosnahan stars in "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," about a 1950s-era housewife who gives stand-up comedy a shot.

2

'Early Man' rocks cave-dweller humor



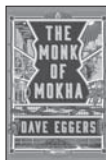
Aardman Animations — the folks behind Wallace and Gromit — have put their claymation wizardry and wacky humor to work on "Early Man," which examines a group of cave-dwellers confronted by the Bronze Age. With jokes like the iPhone (left), kids and parents alike are likely to find amusement.

• **Movie reviews on Page 25.**

3

Eggers' 'Monk' a success story

A young immigrant to America returns to Yemen with the dream of reviving ancient coffee-growing traditions in "The Monk of Mokha," the latest nonfiction from Dave Eggers. Mokhtar's journey is fascinating as he doesn't know what he's doing much of the time, but manages to succeed anyway.



• **Book reviews on Page 38.**

4

Rhye seductive, sharp with 'Blood'

The sophisticated Los Angeles soul-funk band "Rhye" has recently released "Blood," a stirring new album that's a bit rough around the edges but still a strikingly tender examination of love, both lost and new. The album does examine frontman Mike Milosh's recent divorce with the track "Waste," but other tracks depicting a slow-developing courtship feel refreshingly respectful in an era of #Metoo and hookup culture.

• **Profile, review on Pages 36-37.**

WEEKEND: MOVIES

MAKING HISTORY

How Chadwick Boseman brought power, purpose to Marvel's 'Black Panther'

By JEN YAMATO
Los Angeles Times

Long before he was cast as the first black superhero of the modern Marvel era, and before he brought the Avengers-adjacent King T'Challa of Wakanda to life in his own groundbreaking standalone tentpole, Chadwick Boseman was keeping notes on what a "Black Panther" movie should be.

"I can remember several times writing in my journals, 'That would be a cool thing to see in Black Panther' — ideas from real life, from real history, or real archaeology or architecture," said Boseman, 40, taking in the sunshine on a Beverly Hills, Calif. hotel terrace in the midst of a frenetic press tour.

"The projects that I end up doing, that I want to be involved with in any way, have always been projects that will be impactful, for the most part, to my people — to black people," said Boseman, a playwright and theater director turned actor and, now, blockbuster movie star. "To see black people in ways which you have not seen them before. So 'Black Panther' was on my radar, and in my dreams."

Having first come to wide attention as baseball legend Jackie Robinson in 2013's "42," Boseman went on to play James Brown in "Get On Up" the following year and then future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall in last year's "Marshall." That run of critically acclaimed performances cemented Boseman as a go-to actor for (real life) heroes even before the high-profile "Black Panther" gig came along.

Fifty-two years after debuting in the pages of Marvel Comics, the character, created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, is getting his biggest pop culture berth yet. Directed by "Fruitvale Station" and "Creed" helmer Ryan Coogler and co-written by Boseman and Joe Robert Cole, "Black Panther" arrives in theaters on a wave of overwhelming critical acclaim and is poised for a domestic box office opening in the range of \$150 million.

Boseman and Coogler, 31, have already made an impact with their take on "Black Panther,"

“The projects that I end up doing have always been projects that will be impactful, for the most part, to my people — to black people. To see black people in ways which you have not seen them before. So ‘Black Panther’ was on my radar, and in my dreams.”

Chadwick Boseman

a sprawling work of Afrofuturistic fantasy flair exploding its way out of the Marvel Cinematic Universe formula and flourishing in the absence of, well, the Avengers. Instead of Tony Stark and his crew, it's Boseman's T'Challa and his fellow countrymen and women — played by Lupita Nyong'o, Daniel Kaluuya, Danai Gurira, Forest Whitaker, Letitia Wright, Winston Duke and Angela Bassett, leading a predominantly black cast — who take center stage.

The lineup of black talent in front of and behind the camera, unprecedented for a movie of this scale, has already established Coogler's film as a standard-bearer for black representation in Hollywood. Even the setting — the fictional African country of Wakanda, a tech-forward tribalist nation that has long kept its advances, and its stockpiles of the powerful metal vibranium, secret from the outside world — is revolutionary in the comic book genre.

Coogler's world-building is transporting and vibrant, weaving the DNA of African cultures into the fabric of the film with the help of collaborators both new (veteran costume designer Ruth E. Carter) and familiar (production designer Hannah Beachler, cinematographer Rachel Morrison). But it's within the fraught dynamic between the hero and his primary adversary where "Black Panther" deftly explores subversive and probing concerns around race, history, heritage and identity.

Building off T'Challa's introduction in "Captain America: Civil War," Boseman steps fully into the hero's suit with stately gravitas as the newly crowned king wavers between his late father's isolationist principles and the impulse to open Wakanda to the world. In the process, he encounters a new threat in the form of a mysterious African dubbed Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan, who has starred in each of Coogler's films).

"Most African-Americans have had a moment where they're like, 'I know I'm of African descent — but I don't have that con-

nection,'" said the South Carolina-born Boseman. "That's something that needs to be healed. That's something that's broken and has to be made whole. That conflict within the movie, and the conflict between an African-American and his African (counterpart), is one that has existed since colonialism and since slavery."

"It's interesting to me because it's an in-house conversation that we're allowing y'all to see," he added with a smile, "that I think will also affect you in a much different way because you bring something different."

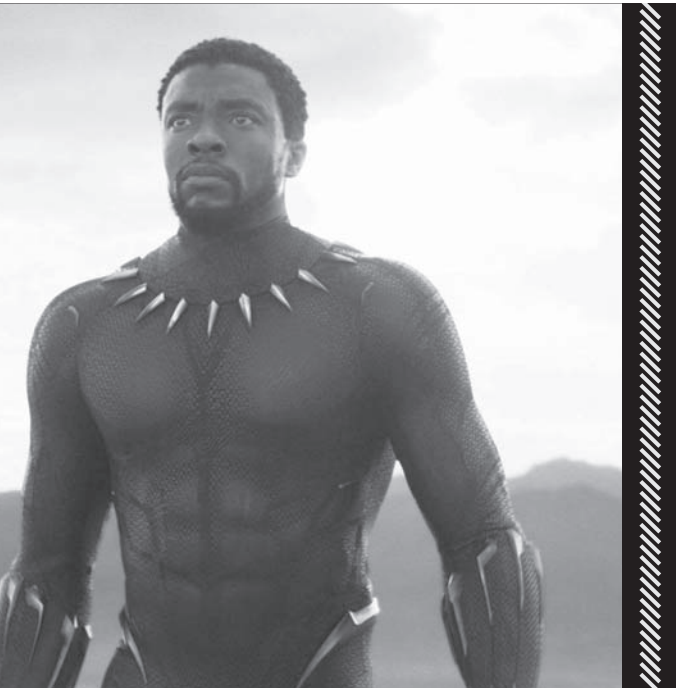
He's excited for young people, especially black men and women, to see themselves reflected onscreen. "The thing that I've noticed is that I have brothers from the continent — people from Nigeria and Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Senegal, South Africa — coming up to me and saying, 'I know you're from here, but you represent what we are back home.' It's touching to me that they get to see an African character onscreen and that they identify with him."

"There will be other people from the States who will see (Michael B. Jordan's) character and identify with him. I actually do. Because his argument is a valid argument, the disconnection from Africa and the need to know where you come from."

But people of all ages and walks of life will leave the theater with what they bring to it, he muses. "There are also a lot of little white kids that are excited about 'Black Panther' — who I've seen in Black Panther costumes, who want autographs and toys signed — kids that are Asian, Latino," he said. "There's no limitation on ethnicity and gender or even age. All of that is humbling, to say the least."

"Black Panther," starring Chadwick Boseman in the title role, proudly represents not only a wide swath of heritage, history and celebratory black identity but touches openly on the ripple effect their presence and absence can have across generations.

Marvel Studios/Disney/AP



WEEKEND: MOVIES

‘Black Panther’: A marvel of a movie

Film bound to be one of '18's best

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Believe the hype: “Black Panther” is easily Marvel’s best film to date. This exhilarating, beautiful and genuinely moving superhero film is firmly rooted in the point of view of director and co-writer Ryan Coogler, a tremendous example of the radical possibilities to be found in Afrofuturism. Coogler builds a thrilling, exciting world, and threads throughout it a story filled with pathos and real-world gravitas. Although our hero, T’Challa (Chadwick Boseman), hails from the African country of Wakanda — a technological wonder powered by the natural resource vibranium — “Black Panther” is Coogler through and through, with a storyline that originates on the streets of Oakland, Calif. The conflict of the film lies in the gulf between the experiences of the Wakandans, who have been shielded from the world’s inequalities, and those who have been colonized, enslaved and oppressed. T’Challa, who becomes king of Wakanda at the beginning of the film, has to decide how he’s going to position Wakanda to aid in the liberation of black people throughout the world while also protecting his country.

He may be the king, but Boseman very classily allows himself to be upstaged nearly every minute of “Black Panther” by the

women of Wakanda. He’s flanked by the luminous Lupita Nyong’o as Nakia, a Wakandan spy and his love interest, as well as the warrior Okoye, the stunning, righteous and ferocious Danai Gurira, who just about walks away with the whole movie. His mother, Ramonda, is played by the inimitable Angela Bassett, and two newcomers also shine: Letitia Wright as T’Challa’s spunky sister, Shuri, and Winston Duke as M’Baku, a rival tribe leader who challenges him for the throne.

Electronic hip-hop beats from Kendrick Lamar course throughout the bold, colorful world, which melds traditional African aesthetics with modern flair. Coogler brings his audacious, slick style to “Black Panther,” with long tracking shots and clean, crisp action shot by Oscar-nominated cinematographer Rachel Morrison. “Black Panther” is an epic, immersive, world-building experience, but it stays grounded in its action, and pitches the stakes and scope at the individual level. The visual thrills are suspenseful because we care about the characters involved.

This is a superhero film with a point of view that is fiery, radical and revolutionary — which comes from Michael B. Jordan’s Erik Killmonger, a villain and the most fascinating character. With his punky dreads and gold lower canines, Erik oozes cool. But what makes him so riveting



Marvel Studios

Chadwick Boseman, right, plays an African king and Marvel Comics superhero in the action-adventure film “Black Panther.” Co-starring Michael B. Jordan, left, and Daniel Kaluuya, background.

is not his style, swagger or sex appeal, but his deep well of anger. Jordan is a live wire onscreen, his rage constantly at a low rolling boil. He simmers like he’s spring-loaded, ready to explode at any moment.

Erik’s rage is justified. You feel it in your bones, because Jordan makes it that real. He’s a kid who grew up on tough American streets, without a father, not in Wakanda enjoying a futuristic, royal lifestyle. He wants to har-

ness that power for black liberation, and although the methods he employs are extreme, you root for his success. Erik is filled with all the rage, grief, fear, resentment and fire that comes from being a minority crushed by a colonizer — an Afrofuturist Nat Turner. T’Challa could never know that pain. His regal pride is what we love about him, but we wear his loss of victory because he wears his chip on his shoulder as a badge of honor, using his

pain for strength.

Although it’s only February, “Black Panther” is bound to be one of the best films of 2018, period, no need for the qualifiers “superhero” or “Marvel.” It’s an awesome vision from one of our most exciting young directors, coursing with his DNA — his values, beliefs and perspective branded indelibly upon it.

“Black Panther” is rated PG-13 for action violence, and a brief rude gesture. Running time: 134 minutes.

‘Early Man’ wonderfully full of dated material

By RICK BENTLEY
Tribune News Service

Ardman Animations star Nick Park, the brilliant mind behind the adventures of Wallace and Gromit, “tries to outdo the Flintstones in his latest comedy, ‘Early Man.’ The film milks humor out of primordial playfulness and primitive puns. On that level it scores big, but the film slightly misses the mark when it comes to the kind of humanity Park has presented over the years through “Wallace and Gromit” offerings.

It’s only a minor miss, leaving the movie overall one of the most delightful tales of men in animal pelts in recent film and TV history.

It all starts a few minutes after the dawn of time, when a handful of cave people have found a sanctuary in a lush valley surrounded by a no man’s land where giant killer ducks roam. They live a simple life of sleeping, hunting rabbits and sleeping some more. The only member of their group who shows any initiative is Dug (voiced by Eddie Redmayne), who wants the cavemen and cavewomen to think in bigger terms.

That plan is put on hold when Lord Nooth (Tom Hiddleston) sends his more civilized followers into the valley to start mining the bronze Nooth has used to become fabulously rich. Nooth’s world is so advanced they have metal weapons,



Lionsgate

“Early Man” is set at the exact moment the Stone and Bronze Ages collide.

wheels and soccer (it’s actually known as football by the Stone Age denizens, but calling the sport that would create all sorts of confusion).

The only way Dug and his beastly sidekick Hognob can save the valley is for his group to defeat Nooth’s super talented team in a winner-take-all soccer match. The only hitch in the plan is that while early man played a form of soccer, the lat-

est generation wouldn’t know a goal from a gull. Their only hope comes in the form of Goona (Maisie Williams), a young girl from Nooth’s world who has been denied the right to show off her sports skills because of gender bias.

Much of the humor in the script by Mark Burton and James Higginson (based on a story by Park) relies heavily on anachronisms for comedy. Playing a game of soccer between early man and not-quite-as-early man is the biggest bit of twisting of history, but it continues from the use of a weird bug as an electric razor to giant black-and-white bugs worn as if they were soccer shoes.

Despite the fact that this historical twisting writing has been used in “The Flintstones,” there’s still something entertaining about seeing how the modern world is played out in the primitive world. It helps that Hiddleston does such a clever job of giving vocal life to Nooth that everything around him seems just a bit funnier.

The film automatically generates smiles through the distinct style Park uses to fashion his stop-animation characters. There’s something both instantly endearing and quickly silly about the exaggerated facial features and body shapes of the characters. His style is as unique as any great artist who can be identified with only a few brushstrokes.

The style not only fits the flights of fancy his films tend to take, but is the animation version of comfort food because the oddly-

shaped characters spark an immediate confidence in the project. High expectations have been earned by Park since his “Creature Comforts” short in 1989.

The majority of his work has featured the pairing of the good-hearted but slightly off-center Wallace and the canine Gromit, who has been his staunch companion through the best and numerous worst times. This is the element missing from “Early Man” that keeps it from being as unforgettable as any “Wallace and Gromit” tale — the way Wallace and Gromit have been portrayed over the years as two best friends who would go to any extreme for the other. This kind of pairing is rare in films, especially as the animated characters are able to show so much humanity while getting across so much humor.

Park tries to replicate that with Dug and Hognob. The pair do show a fun chemistry, and Hognob has as much human in him as Gromit has, but he and Dug never completely bond. That might happen if “Early Man” becomes a franchise, but it isn’t quite there in this first outing. Such an observation is more of a nitpick than a complaint. Looking at “Early Man” as a whole, it combines weirdly funny comedy with a sweet story about what it means to depend on others. Everything comes together so that the homo sapiens of “Early Man” score plenty of jokes that are smartly dated.

“Early Man” is rated PG for rude humor and some action. Running time: 89 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



BOGUS!

By MICHAEL S. DARNELL
Stars and Stripes

It's safe to say we're in the midst of a full-fledged hurricane of '80s nostalgia. From Netflix's "Stranger Things" to the plastering of neon colors on everything, the decade that saw the rise of Members Only jackets and Madonna has made a scorching return to pop culture.

And more than a few video games have sought to cash in on this current craze, the latest of which is "Crossing Souls," a pixelated roleplaying adventure by Spanish developer Fourattic.

Fourattic's small team clearly has a love for all things '80s, and it shows in every aspect of "Souls." From the pixel art that evokes video games of yore, to the low-budget Saturday morning cartoon-esque cutscenes, to the dozens of references to everything from Michael Jackson to "Ghostbusters," "Souls" is packed with love letters to the decade that Ronald Reagan built.

Even the game's basic premise, that of a collective of spunky, adventure-seeking kids off to save the world, is ripped from innumerable '80s movies.

"Crossing Souls" story begins with Chris, a prototypical teenage boy, as he's awakened by the obligatory annoying younger brother. Something mysterious has happened near the gang's treehouse, so Chris gathers up the other members of the crew and off they go.

The world of "Souls" is presented in a top-down fashion, and each location — from the starting hometown, to the Old West village to the lair of the game's chief baddie, is beautiful to behold. The stunning pixel animation injects life into every corner of the game's California setting and is easily the best part of the game.

Combat and exploration are seamlessly integrated, with the former being in real time. Only one character can be controlled at a time, but they can be cycled in and out with the tap of a button, even in combat. This becomes important, as each character brings something new to exploring the world.

There's Big Joe, the rotund kid who can push and pull heavy objects and packs a mean punch in combat. Charlie, the lone girl of the group, can use her jump rope as a catapult to leap long gaps. Matt, the requisite nerdy inventor, has a long-range attack and can hover.

Chris, the de facto main character, can use a baseball bat to attack and redirect projectiles and can also climb

ladders and vines. Kevin, the obnoxious kid brother, can do anything — at least in the beginning.

All of these elements lay out a very strong foundation for the game to build upon. Some remain fantastic throughout the game, chiefly the art direction and soundtrack. Unfortunately, the game's core elements — the controls, story, pacing and even ancillary gameplay additions — simply don't.

As great as it is to watch and soak up the atmosphere of "Souls," it's equally frustrating to actually play.

For instance, the top-down point of view is great for showing off the art direction of "Souls." However, it's terrible for platforming, a mechanic "Souls" relies on throughout the game.

It's difficult to judge which parts of the environment are part of the interactive world and which are just window dressings. As a result, I found myself missing what appeared to be easy solutions to platforming challenges because my character would fall right through pixels that weren't actually there.

That would be bad enough, but the controls themselves are very floaty, making the platforming even more frustrating. Granted, you don't die instantly on missing a platform, but you will be kicked back to the beginning of a section, sans a chunk of health. The same goes for the few stealth sections sprinkled throughout "Souls." As a result, those sections are more frustrating than fun and stick out as the worst segments of the game.

Combat isn't much better. While serviceable, it rarely evolves past walking up to enemies and hitting them with basic attacks until they die.



Overall grade:

D

You're able to find a finite item that stuns all enemies on screen, but that and redirecting projectiles with Chris are the lone combat tricks in your arsenal. I don't need a lot of options in my combat, but what was available here make battles feel more like a chore than an exciting part of the gameplay.

In fact, the only real challenge comes from managing your health. Healing items are finite and health bars don't regenerate outside of combat. Enemies can sometimes drop a small amount of health, but it's rarely enough to keep your team at full strength.

That was an odd design decision, but it pales in comparison to Fourattic's choice to have unskippable cutscenes — and even lengthy platforming bits — before major encounters. If you happen to die, congratulations; you're sitting through all of it again.

In one egregious example, I had to sit through 15 dialogue boxes, a couple cutscenes and several waves of combat before being able to re-attempt a boss battle. Every single time. It's a bewildering design choice that permeates the entire game, and while it's not always as bad as that one admittedly late-game example, it's annoying throughout.

The story's pacing could have used a little work, too. The humor falls entirely flat, as most of the jokes and references are nothing more than "Hey, remember this thing from the '80s?" The references themselves are also all over the place, with '80s slogans and collectibles sitting alongside '90s slang and even mid-aughts memes.

"Souls" starts out wanting to be a lighthearted adventure, then veers off into more serious fare. But unlike, say, "Bridge to Terabithia," the serious moments feel like somebody tried to blend in a little "Grave of the Fireflies" with "The Goonies," and it doesn't work. The attempts at emotional impact never land because we're not shown much about the characters beyond their archetype.

I wish "Souls" had been a better game. It has a lot to love, and some fans will undoubtedly enjoy their time with it. I find it a difficult game to recommend, though, due to the numerous frustrations that piled up during my playthrough.

Grade: D

Platform: PC (reviewed), Mac, Linux, PS4

A copy of this game was provided for review purposes.

Many more staff-written game reviews at stripes.com/games

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



MEDIEVAL MEETS MODERN

Castles, bachelorette parties equally at home in Ireland's charming Kilkenny

By ELLEN PERLMAN
Special to The Washington Post

On a sunny Friday afternoon in April, the sleepy city of Kilkenny, Ireland, began to wake up. Chattering students filled the sidewalks, their book bags slung across school uniforms, many of the boys carrying the short, hockey-like sticks used in hurling. Locals hurried through Butter Slip, a narrow passage between two streets where butter vendors set up stalls in medieval times. And shoppers ducked into the small stores that share a main street with a 17th-century merchant's house and an 18th-century town hall building that was served as a customhouse.

This bustle was different from the quietude I'd observed upon arriving alone a few days before. I was at the midpoint of a two-week tour of the country with a rotating roster of companions, looking for somewhere to settle down for a few days — someplace not too far from Dublin, because I needed to return there afterward. I felt a pull toward Kilkenny after reading that it had both a medieval castle and a contemporary design center.

Everything there, it seemed, had two sides.

The city was subdued when I walked the half-mile from the station — down John Street, over the River Nore, past the castle and up Patrick Street — to my hotel. Rows of quaint storefronts set a pretty scene, but many of the shops were closed. I passed a handful of people at most.

That first afternoon, I settled in at a table in the Ground Floor Cafe on High Street and studied its traditional menu of toasted sandwiches and brown baps (sandwiches on rolls), along with my maps and literature.

An hour-and-a-half south of Dublin by train, Kilkenny — a town of 27,000 residents — is a blend of old and new with a thriving arts culture woven through it. The exit from Kilkenny Castle, which was built around 1195, leads to the Kilkenny Design Center, which is filled with modern crafts in addition to traditional patterned pillows, hand-knit hats and Irish linens. A cavernous pub in a former bank building sits half a block from a tiny tavern in Ireland's oldest surviving townhouse. A 17th-century merchant's house is a stone's throw from a present-day knickknack shop.

In the evening, perhaps needing a break from the delicious, rich Irish beef stew I'd been eating for days, I ended up at an Italian restaurant. My waitress, an Irish woman married to the Italian chef, lit up when she learned I was in town on my own. She, too, likes her solitude sometimes, she told me: "It gives me time to breathe."

On the way back to my hotel, I stopped in at the vast Left Bank Pub, a former Bank of Ireland branch. Every window of the three-story building glowed like it was backlit by a roaring fire. I had the bartender to myself.

"Would you be horrified if I ordered a half pint of Guinness with blackcurrant?" I asked him. In Dublin, I'd overheard an American couple ordering it and was curious.

"It's usually tourists," he said.

During my junior year in England, I'd learned to drink a shandy — beer sweetened with "lemonade," or lemon-lime soda. I was interested in comparing that to a mix of Guinness and sweet, blackcurrant syrup. A sip convinced me to stick with shandies or hard ciders if I want sweet — and just drink a draft Guinness straight up.

In the morning, I headed down the impossibly picturesque High Street — dubbed the Medieval Mile — and took in the array of brightly colored pubs and shops. Many sported black-and-amber flags, scarves and other paraphernalia of the Kilkenny Cats, County Kilkenny's highly successful hurling team.

High on a hill in a neighborhood called Irish-town loomed the imposing, 13th-century St. Canice's Cathedral and its Round Tower, which closely resembles a smokestack. They can be reached via a steep stone staircase.

I entered the dark cathedral to find high ceilings and impressive stained glass windows. I saw enough to be satisfied without paying a fee to enter the pews. Back on High Street, it was time for gift shopping. I picked up a couple of bags of fudge — Guinness and whiskey flavors.

That evening, I went to the Watergate Theatre to see an American musical called "The Parade," performed by the Kilkenny Musical Society. There, a gray-haired man kissed many people hello while taking tickets. I can't say I've seen that at an American concert venue. This man knew half the crowd.

On Friday morning, I toured Kilkenny Castle. Sun filtered through the windows, brightening



the period furnishings. It is thought that the site was chosen by Strongbow — the nickname of Richard de Clare, the Second Earl of Pembroke — shortly after the portion of the Norman invasion he led in the 1170s.

An informative docent enthusiastically answered my questions about the second-floor paintings, fireplace equipment and furniture.

What are those things in front of the castle's fireplaces? They're adjustable screens that protected women's faces from the fire, she told me, because the heat would melt their wax-based makeup. That 16th-century painting of a white-faced Queen Elizabeth I? Women used heavy white paste to cover the pock marks left from smallpox. And that red-cushioned chair with seats for three? It was a love seat that accommodated courting couples — and their guardians.

That night, back in town, hen parties were everywhere — Kilkenny is listed as one of the top 10 cities in Ireland to hold bachelorette parties. Outside Matt the Miller's, a woman in a white T-shirt, white jeans and a veil had a red "L" for "learner" pinned to her back — the student-driver sign usually affixed to a car's bumper.

At night's end, I found myself at the Hole in the Wall, a 16th-century tavern that is as small as its name suggests. When I opened the door, everyone turned to see who had arrived. I almost backed out. But owner Michael Conway waved me in. Conway is a hospital cardiologist by day, a cheery bar host by night.

"I'm going to sing a song," he announced later. "About a woman who abandons a man. Christy Moore sings it."

I had snagged one of the four stools that fit at the short bar and got a good view of the lyrics written on the large flip chart Conway held. My pub mates and I sang along as best we could while he turned the pages. The warm camaraderie of the tavern was the perfect coda to the evening. I thought, as I walked back through a city pulsing with energy.

Above: Rows of colorful pubs, restaurants and shops line Kilkenny's Parliament Street. The town in Ireland is about 90 minutes south of Dublin by train.

Left: The site of the medieval Kilkenny Castle, set in lush park lands along the River Nore, probably was chosen by Richard de Clare, the Second Earl of Pembroke, shortly after the portion of the Norman invasion he led in the 1170s.

PHOTOS BY ELLEN PERLMAN
Special to The Washington Post

Online:
visitkilkenny.ie

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Better transportation
opens Italy even wider

Italy bubbles with emotion, corruption, traffic jams, strikes, rallies, religious holidays and crowds. Irrate travelers will be shaking their fists at each other one minute and walking arm-in-arm the next. It's bella chaos, and if you're well-organized for sightseeing and up-to-date on your transit info, you'll love it. Here's the latest, gleaned from the research done for the 2018 edition of my Italy guidebook, to help you enjoy Europe's richest, craziest country.

Rome, that magnificent, tangled urban forest, has been improving its tourist infrastructure and offerings. Two new sound-and-light shows in the Trajan's Forum area are an increasingly popular evening activity: the Caesar's Forum Street and the Forum of Augustus Show. Both shows help you imagine the world of the Caesars, as colorful images are projected on ancient walls, columns and porticos while English narration brings the story to life. And Ara Comera ("The Ara as it was") is a new 45-minute "virtual reality" show at Museo dell'Ara Pacis, which shows visitors to see what the Altar of Peace looked like in its day. The Pantheon, one of the city's best-preserved ancient monuments that is currently free to enter, will start charging an entry fee (about \$2) in May.

I still strongly recommend getting the Roma Pass, which is now a single plastic card that covers both sightseeing and transportation. Rome's main train station, Termini, has good new dining options: the modern Mercato Centrale market hall and the bright and spacious Terrazza Termini food court.

It's not more worthwhile than ever to make the trip south, just beyond Naples, to Pompeii. The site's best-preserved home, the House of the Vetii, with its many

surviving mosaics and frescoes, is finally reopened after a long closure.

As the birthplace of the Renaissance, Florence is a priority on any Italian itinerary. However, sightseers must deal, as always, with constant changes to the city's sightseeing ticketing and entry schemes.



Rick Steves

For instance, travelers who want to view the Uffizi Gallery's amazing collection of Italian paintings will pay a significant price increase this year. Peak-season ticket prices (March through October) are up more than 50 percent to about \$25; tickets drop to \$15 in the winter. Seasonal pricing is also being introduced at the Pitti Palace and Boboli Gardens. For the first time, avid sightseers can buy a combination ticket, getting all of these sights. This three-day ticket gives travelers one-time priority entry to all three sights, and will cost about \$45 in peak season (half that in winter).

For the past couple of years, reservations have been required to climb the Florence Duomo's famous dome. The sight is extremely popular, and time slots can book up many days in advance. If climbing the dome is a must for you, book online in advance. If you wait until you arrive in town, it might be too late.

Visiting nearby Pisa is better organized and easier than ever with the opening of the new "Pisa Mover" train, which connects Pisa's airport and its train station in five minutes. Pisa's main tourist information office has moved to a convenient

spot at the Field of Miracles, next to the Duomo's ticket office.



LAURA VANDEVENTER/RickStevens.com

Book a time slot in advance for the popular climb up Florence's Duomo.

Visitors to San Gimignano, Italy's most overrated hill town, can partake in a new option: gelato-making classes, offered by Sergio di Gelateria Dondoli in his kitchen down the street from his shop. Charismatic Sergio was a member of the Italian team that won the official Gelato World Cup — and his gelato really is a cut above.

Urban improvements are underway in bustling northern Italy. Arriving by train in Milan is now much more convenient, now that high-speed Italo trains stop at Milano Centrale (instead of at the less central Porta Garibaldi station). In Venice, a new hotspot has opened amidst the elegant decay. Located near the Rialto Bridge, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi luxury shopping mall has great rooftop views of Europe's most enchanting city.

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Cruise ships are now stopping in the port of La Spezia for their excursions to Florence. And, as alighting in La Spezia puts them so close to the popular Cinque Terre region, thousands of cruisers are opting for excursions into this most

spectacular stretch of the Italian Riviera. Consequently, the Cinque Terre is experiencing more congestion than ever. The hordes converge on its five tiny ports for the lovely hikes through the national park that connect them. While segments of the regional hike are invariably closed because of frequent washouts and landslides, there are always plenty of open hiking trails in the nearby hills.

It's always smart to be on guard against thieves in any place with tourist crowds (in Italy and beyond), but now that the Cinque Terre's train stations are so often overcrowded, it's especially smart to protect yourself against fast-fingered pickpockets targeting foreign visitors there.

Italy continues to be as exquisite — and exasperating — as ever. While it might seem as orderly as spilled spaghetti, the country actually functions quite well. If you have a positive attitude, equip yourself with good information and expect to travel smart, you will. Buon viaggio!

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Strasbourg wine salon

Love wine? Dabblers and experts alike have much to discover by attending a Salon des Vins des Vignerons Independants.

The ever-popular traveling wine exhibition and tasting fair stops at Strasbourg Feb. 16-19.

The concept of the salon is straightforward: Independent winemakers from all regions of France come face to face with the public and share personal stories about their wines, vineyards and philosophy. A testing glass furnished upon entry allows for sampling of the wares. To place all vintners on a level playing field, all stands are identical, and appellations are scattered randomly throughout the halls. Free professional-led degustations are held several times daily.

The "chariot rental" service involves the use of a trolley for picking up purchases, which are then gathered by the exit as you return for pickup with your vehicle. The service is free for the first hour and costs 2 euros per hour thereafter.

The salon takes place in Halls 20 and 21 of Wacken, Place de la Foire Exposition, 67000 Stras-



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

bourg. Hours are 3 p.m.-9 p.m. Feb. 16; 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Feb. 17 and 18, and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Feb. 19. Adult entry costs 6 euros; those under 15 enter free. Other upcoming salons will be held in Bordeaux March 2-4; Lyon March 16-18; Paris Champertret March 23-26 and Mandelieu April 5-8. Online: www.vignerons-independent.com.

Motorcycles in Munich

With spring just around the corner, many are dreaming of getting out on two wheels. The Internationale Motorrad Ausstellung, or IMOT, gives an overview

of the latest scooters, trikes, quads and motorbikes. The event's 25th anniversary edition runs through Feb. 18 in Munich.

Major manufacturers are well represented among the show's 300 exhibitors. Models in the limelight this year include the Ducati Panigale V4, the newest generation of the Honda GL 1800 Goldwing, BMW's F 750 GS and F 850 GS Enduros, and the KTM Duke 790, dubbed as "The Scapelp." Harley-Davidson's latest lineup will be there too, including some of its new softail models.

In addition to the bikes themselves, visitors can check out accessories, protective gear, tuning parts and demos. Some of this year's special shows focus on the Bimota BB3 TT, Boxer classics, and the classic-meets-high-tech custom bikes built by Bavaria-based daVinci Motors. An enclosed track allows even those without motorcycle licenses to take a couple of trial rounds.

The show takes place at the MOC Veranstaltungszentrum Muenchen, Lillenthalallee 40, 80939 Muenchen-Freimann. The event website advises visitors to park at the P3 parking area of the Allianz-Arena and take a free



Vignerons Independants de France

Independent winemakers from all regions of France converge on Strasbourg to mingle with the public this weekend.

shuttle to the venue. Show hours are 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on all days. Admission at the gate costs 15 euros for adults, 4 euros for ages 12-18 and is free for those under age 11. Tickets for entry after 4:30 p.m. cost 6 euros. Online: imot.de.

Delft's got the blues

Blues music across its broad range of subgenres, from Boogie Woogie to Delta to Rockabilly, enjoys international appeal. Through Sunday, local adherents will be joined by fans from all corners of Holland and beyond in the canal-ringed city of Delft, which has its own connection to blue: Delftware is the distinctive blue and white pottery produced there since the 17th century.

The Delft Blues Festival, billed as Netherlands' biggest indoor blues festival, marks its twentieth edition in 2018. More than 70 bands will play in 36 locations, from cozy pubs and casual eateries to upscale hotels. Special events on Feb. 17 include a performance by a gospel & soul choir at the Maria van Jesse Church at 2:30 p.m. and "Rooted in the Blues," a performance tracing the influence of the blues in contemporary pop and rock music, at the Rietveld Theater at 4 p.m.

Saturday's concerts start at 2 p.m. and run well past midnight, on Sunday, ten groups play between noon and 8 p.m. Entry to the concerts is free. Online: delftblues.nl.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY KENT HARRIS/Stars and Stripes

A corner of La Torre, a restaurant on the south side of Pordenone near Aviano Air Base, features dozens of wine bottles that are yours for the drinking for about 20 euros (\$25) each.

After Hours: Italy

By KENT HARRIS
Stars and Stripes

It doesn't take that long for those assigned to Aviano Air Base to get to know their way around the city of Pordenone at least a little bit.

Hundreds of Americans live in the city of about 80,000 people, which is located about 10 minutes south of the base.

But there are areas most Americans don't get to. Villanova, a suburb on the south side that's not easily reached by the major roads, is one of them.

Diego Felice, an Italian national who runs a bus company that takes many American schoolchildren to and from school, is familiar with the area. He used to jog and ride his bike and admire the building that housed La Torre's predecessor. When that owner left the business, he asked Felice if he wanted to run his own restaurant.

Felice did, and so with his sister and brother-in-law, he opened La Torre in June 2016.

It's attracted some American guests, Felice said, but it's a bit out of the way. The menu's in Italian, and other than Felice, not many in the restaurant speak much English.

The pizza — there are more than 40 combinations listed on the menu — is thin and oblong, with squarish pieces.

Because it's so thin, it can be somewhat difficult to eat. Should you use your hands or a knife and fork?

"It's the same," Felice said. "It's up to you."

There's no such dilemma with the second-course options, an array of Black Angus steaks from Australia or Ireland.

"It's the best," Felice said of importing the meat from such distances.

The appetizer list is also heavy on meat. There are a handful of pasta options for first courses. And for those who'd like some lamb (from New Zealand, of course), that's an option among the second courses.

The dessert menu contains another pizza of sorts. This one features Nutella as a topping.

Felice said he's considered marrying his two enterprises, using his buses to get Americans from the base to his restaurant for special gatherings.

In the meantime, bring the GPS. And an appetite.

harris.kent@stripes.com



Order a pizza from La Torre — there are more than 40 combinations — and you'll get an ultra-thin crust and a shape other than a circle.

LA TORRE

Directions: Some GPS units might have trouble finding the place, as there are a number of streets called Villanova. Without one, the easiest way to get there from Aviano is to head to the train station in Pordenone and continue toward the fairgrounds. Instead of turning right at the traffic circle, take a left onto Viale delle Grazie and then right at the circle by the Al Lido restaurant onto Via Mestre. Turn right onto Via Nuova di Corva, then left onto Via Alessandro Manzoni. Take a right after two blocks onto Via Villanova and follow that for a long way. It'll eventually turn into Frazione Villanova. The restaurant will be on the left. Park on the street. The address is Frazione Villanova 5, Pordenone, Italy.

Hours: Open daily for lunch 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and dinner 6-11 p.m. Closed on Tuesdays and for lunch on Saturdays. Reservations are a good idea, especially on the weekends.

Cientele: Local Italians

Menu: In Italian. You might have to get translations from the owner, who's there every night.

Food: Pizza, pasta and lots of meat. There's an array of second courses featuring Black Angus steaks from Australia and Ireland. Italian and Belgian beers are on tap, and there are several choices of red and white wines.

Information: Phone: (+39)0434-571848, website: ristorantelatorrepordenone.it

— Kent Harris

Salmon and vinaigrette is easy but impressive

By KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

A good piece of fish needs very little to make it brisk, anisey-tangy flavor of tarragon vinaigrette is a wonderful complement to the lushness of salmon filets.

If you start with excellent salmon and super-fresh herbs, and don't overcook the fish, you cannot mess this up. It's a less-imore dish.

The mix of orange and lemon juices in the vinaigrette provides a nice balance of sweetness and tanginess. If you are in possession of a Meyer lemon, you could use 3 tablespoons of that juice in place of the mix, and get similar results. Not exactly the same, but something else wonderful.

I love starting fish in a pan (make sure your fish is fairly thick, about 1 inch or even thicker) and then transferring it to a stove to finish cooking. Here are the three main reasons why:

- You can use the oven to cook something else to go with the fish, whether it's roasted potatoes or other vegetables.
- If you are cooking the fish

with the skin on, you can get that pan screaming hot before you add the fish, and when the skin hits the pan it starts to crisp up immediately. It then stays crisp and delicious and great to eat. Soft fish skin: not good. Crisp fish skin: a fabulous counterpoint to a well-cooked, soft, delicate fish.

• Perhaps best of all: You don't have to flip the fish, which even for the most confident and experienced cooks doesn't always end well.

Salmon is available everywhere because it's so good and so popular. If you can get wild Alaskan salmon, do yourself (and the environment) a favor and buy it. It has a more pronounced flavor than farm-raised does, so you're getting the full salmon experience. And because the Alaskan seafood folks are vigilant about sustainability and harvesting practices, you know you're eating salmon that has no growth hormones, artificial coloring, preservatives or added stuff that you might be wondering about in fish.

Serve this with rice and a green salad, or a whole-grain salad mixed with some fresh or roasted vegetables.

SALMON WITH TARRAGON VINAIGRETTE

Ingredients:

Serves 4

Start to finish: 25 minutes

For the Salmon:

1 tablespoon olive oil, plus more for brushing

4 (6-ounce) fillets of salmon,

1-inch thick, skin on if desired

Salt and pepper for tasting

For the Tarragon Vinaigrette:

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons fresh orange

juice

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons minced fresh

tarragon leaves

2 tablespoons minced shallots

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Coarse or kosher salt and

freshly ground pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Heat a heavy, ovenproof

skillet over high heat and add 1 tablespoon of the olive oil.

Brush some olive oil over each piece of salmon, and season with salt and pepper. Add the salmon to the pan, skin side down (if relevant). Allow to sear, without moving, in the pan for about 3 minutes. Transfer to the oven and roast for 5 to 8 minutes, until done to your liking.

While the salmon is cooking, in a small container combine the olive oil, orange juice, lemon juice, tarragon, shallots, Dijon mustard, and salt and pepper. Shake to combine.

Transfer the fish to a serving platter or individual plates. Shake the vinaigrette to remix it, and then pour it over the fish. Serve hot or warm.

Nutrition per serving: 285 calories



The mix of orange and lemon juices in the vinaigrette provides a nice balance of sweetness and tanginess to Salmon with Tarragon Vinaigrette, an almost foolproof dish.

AP

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe



Clockwise from top left: The Peter Paul Rubens paintings "Ecce Homo," "The Entombment," "The Head of Medusa" and a self-portrait of the artist are part of the exhibit "Rubens: The Power of Transformation" at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, Germany. The exhibit runs through May 21.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes



MIND OF A MASTER

Art exhibit in Frankfurt examines Rubens' influences

BY MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

Peter Paul Rubens is one of the world's best known baroque painters. Born in 1577 into a wealthy, influential Flemish family, he was hardly what one would call a suffering artist.

Unlike his father and older brother who were lawyers, Rubens went off to study the arts. By the time of his death in 1640, he was what today would be considered a superstar, influencing a whole generation of painters, a rich, successful artist with his own workshop of painters under him.

The Städel — Frankfurt, Germany's pre-eminent art museum — has a must-see exhibit on the artist going on now.

Where many Rubens exhibitions show his influences on artists that followed him, "Rubens: The Power of Transformation," traces his artistic roots and what influenced him throughout his career. Rubens literally and figuratively transformed the art of others — both from antiquity and contemporaries — to inspire his art.

This is perhaps best seen in one of the centerpieces of the show, his painting "Ecce Homo," showing Christ and Pontius Pilate. Nearby stands a Roman statue of a centaur tamed by Cupid. An early sketch by Rubens shows the statue, but in the painting, the centaur has metamorphosed into Christ and Cupid to Pilate.

Likewise, in another work, a crouching Roman statue of Venus influences his "Venus Frigida" and figures in "Venus mourning Adonis."

Rubens also bought pieces by other artists and reworked them. Not necessarily to make them bet-

ter, but to further a theme he was working on or to inspire other ideas.

Another theme touched on in the exhibit is competition between artists, known at the time as *aemulatio*, Latin for emulation.

On one wall hangs Rubens' "Prometheus," nearby Rembrandt's amazing "The Blinding of Samson."

It is thought that the Rembrandt and especially Samson's pain was inspired by Prometheus' agony in the Rubens, as the eagle eats from his liver. Taking someone's art to inspire yourself to do better was an accepted idea then, as it is now.

The exhibit pulls together masterpieces from renowned art museums worldwide, including the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia, the Prado in Madrid and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, to name a few.

While almost all of the art presented here is interesting, some works are worth a closer look, like "The Entombment," where Christ's eyes are clearly dead, but the tears in his mourners' eyes look real, or the almost surrealistic "The Head of Medusa," with its nest of snakes surrounding Medusa's severed head.

One other work worth noting is Rubens' self-portrait. A Rembrandt would show the artist painted at his easel. But not Rubens. He paints himself with collar, cloak, hat and sword, as the aristocrat that he is, with nary an easel in sight.

To better understand the exhibit and its concept, check out the Städel's multimedia "Digitalorial" on its website.

And if you are really interested in the art, but can't make the show, the Digitalorial is the way to go.

abrams.mike@stripes.com
Twitter: @stripes_photog



ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

The Städel is at Schaumainkai 63, on the south bank of the Main River, the city's famed Museumsufer or museum embankment. Parking garages are available nearby. Subway lines U1, U2, U3 and U8 stop at Schweitzerplatz, which is about a 10-minute walk, and Frankfurt's main train station is about a 15-minute walk, crossing the Main on the pedestrian Holbeinsteg bridge.

TIMES

The Rubens exhibit runs until May 21. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays; 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays. Closed Mondays.

COSTS

Admission Tuesday to Friday is 14 euros for adults; teens under 18 years old 12 euros; children 12 and under get in free. A family ticket (which can't be bought online) costs 24 euros for two adults and at least one child (own children and grandchildren under the age of 18). On Saturdays and Sundays, the tickets cost 2 euros more except for the family ticket.

FOOD

There is a cafeteria in the museum shop for drinks and sandwiches. The Holbein's restaurant offers fine food and is open until midnight.

INFORMATION

The museums website is at staedelmuseum.de, where you can buy tickets online.

— Michael Abrams

Beware the armrests at the airport

By MIA TAYLOR
TravelPulse

Be careful what you touch the next time you're at the airport.

According to recent tests conducted at a handful of stateside airports, self-check-in screens are covered in germs.

The same goes for the armrests on the chairs near airline gates, and water fountain buttons throughout the airport.

Over the recent holiday travel season, insuranceQuotes.com tested surfaces at three of the country's busiest airports. Swabs from those tests were then sent off to a lab to determine the average number of viable bacteria and fungal cells per square inch, or colony-forming units (CFU) as they are otherwise known.

While not entirely surprising, the resulting report shows some alarming levels of bacteria. One particular self-check-in screen had more than one million CFU. The average self-check-in screen had about 253,857 CFU.

To put that in perspective, the average bathroom doorknob has about 203 CFU.

"The kiosks may offer more convenience, but at what cost?" states the report.

Handrests on chairs near boarding gates were found to have about 21,630 CFU. How bad is that? Kitchen sinks, typically the most contaminated places in a home, have fewer bacteria than an armrest at the airport.

Airport surfaces weren't the only places tested for the insuranceQuotes.com report. Researchers also took to the skies and inspected airplane surfaces. Coming as no surprise, the lavatory flush button was found to be the dirtiest place travelers touch a plane. They have an average of 95,145 CFU. Kitchen countertops, by comparison, have an average of 361 CFU.

"It's often thought airplanes are cleaned between each flight, but the FAA actually doesn't regulate or inspect aircraft cleaning," states the report.

According to the report, even when planes are cleaned, only basic, general cleaners are being used, not strong disinfectants. In other words, the dangerous germs remain.

Tray tables should also be approached with caution. The report found them to have 11,595 CFU. Even seat belt buckles didn't escape the list. They have 1,116 CFU.

Though not all bacteria are harmful, there's definitely reason to take caution. A type of bacteria known as gram-positive cocci, for instance, are often the cause of pneumonia, skin, ear and sinus infections, food poisoning, meningitis and toxic shock syndrome. This particular strain of bacteria was found on all of the surfaces that were tested as part of the report.

The moral of the story? Germs are everywhere and unavoidable. So pack hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes on your next trip.

RESTAURANT DIRECTORY



GERMANY



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GERMANY

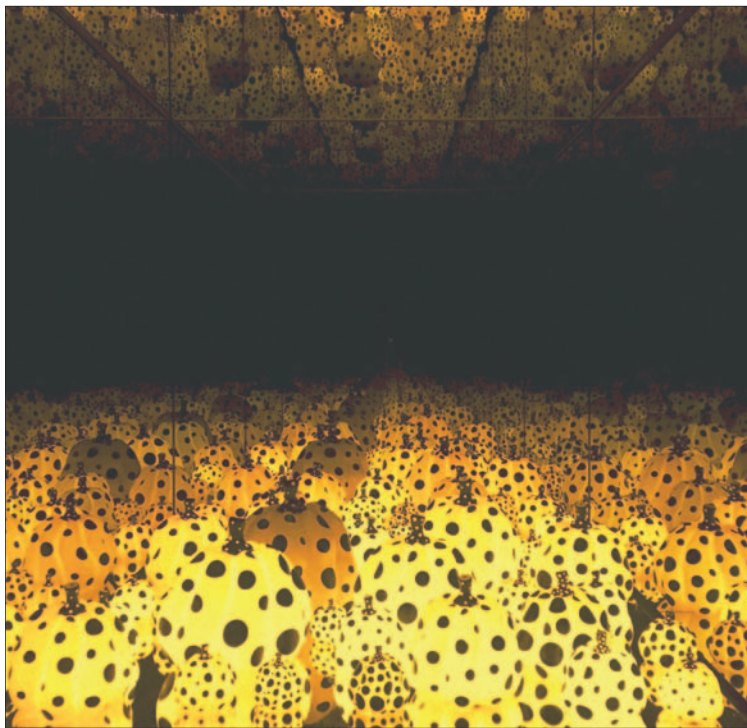
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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific



PHOTOS BY KAT BOUZA/Stars and Stripes

"Pumpkins Screaming About Love Beyond Infinity" at the Yayoi Kusama Museum in Tokyo.

Room for dreams

New museum in Tokyo provides a home for Kusama's enigmatic, fascinating works

By KAT BOUZA
Stars and Stripes

Even if you haven't heard of Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, chances are you've seen her work — perhaps in a museum, but most likely on social media, where her whimsical, technicolor creations are almost always guaranteed to draw a flurry of "likes" and comments.

Born in 1929 in Matsumoto City, Kusama is regarded as one of Japan's most innovative and mysterious modern artists — and is also, arguably, the country's most famous female artist of all time.

A 2017 retrospective of Kusama's work held at the National Art Center in Tokyo drew record-breaking crowds during its three-month run, while a similar exhibition currently touring North America continues to break attendance records at several institutions. Demand for entry to the Los Angeles portion of the exhibition was so great, it caused the museum's ticketing website to crash.

Despite battling a crippling,

unspecified psychiatric disorder marked by recurring hallucinations for most of her life, Kusama remains an active and somewhat imposing figure in the art world, even as she approaches her 90th birthday. Instead of retreating from the public eye, Kusama still works in her Tokyo studio for several hours a day and regularly makes public appearances (albeit in a wheelchair accompanied by an assistant) to promote her art — all while donning her signature fiery red bobbed wig.

Building off the recent renewed interest in her work, Kusama, along with the newly established foundation bearing her name, sought to create a permanent home for her vast body of work — and the Yayoi Kusama Museum opened late last year to much fanfare in Tokyo.

Situated directly across the street from the psychiatric hospital Kusama has voluntarily called home since 1977, the Yayoi Kusama Museum is itself an architectural wonder. Its stark white exterior is accentuated by organic shapes and lines standing out amid the rectangular, Brutal-

ist beige and browns of Tokyo's Shinjuku ward.

Visiting the museum requires the purchase of a timed-entry ticket two months in advance, because admission is limited to 200 visitors per day — and tickets generally sell out within several hours of going on sale.

The museum's inaugural exhibition, titled "Creation is a Solitary Pursuit, Love is What Brings You Closer to Art," compiles works created over the past 15 years, encompassing the primary artistic mediums Kusama now utilizes most frequently: Painting, large-scale sculpture and the artist's signature Infinity Rooms. Kusama devotes will relish the inclusion of several new pieces making their public debut as part of the museum's permanent collection.

A new exhibit — "Here, Now, I have Reached the Grandest Start of My Life" — focuses on artwork produced during Kusama's teenage years and opens at the museum in April. It keeps with the museum's plans to regularly feature rotating curated collections

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33



Yayoi Kusama is regarded as one of Japan's most innovative and mysterious modern artists. The Yayoi Kusama Museum in Tokyo creates a permanent home for her vast body of work.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE

Pacific

FROM PAGE 32

highlighting different aspects of Kusama's nearly seven-decade-long career.

Much like the current exhibition's title, Kusama bestows enigmatic, flowery monikers upon her works ("I Who Have Arrived in the Universe," "Time Goes By, Death Approaches") — meandering and poetic aphorisms that say more about the artist's emotional state while creating the piece than it does about the actual artwork.

Coupled with the weighty titles of her work, Kusama's paintings are physically as larger than life as their names imply — massive, imposing canvases hung almost always in a stacked array, allowing the works to completely envelop the gallery walls in a wash of color and abstract, organic forms.

The museum's third floor, which features a permanent display of paintings from Kusama's recent "My Eternal Soul" series, best captures this phenomenon. There, the display of 17 paintings creates a cacophony of swirling shapes and grotesque, humanoid figures — some bright and childlike in their playful exuberance; others dark and foreboding, oozing with a palpable feeling of loneliness.

But the standout of the collection is, somewhat expectedly, "Pumpkins Screaming About Love Beyond Infinity," the museum's new Infinity Room. A mainstay of her oeuvre since the mid-1960s, Kusama's Infinity Rooms are large-scale installations that utilize the optical illusion created by several carefully arranged mirrors to transform darkened rooms into vast, never-ending dreamlike landscapes. Whether the manipulated spaces are LED lights or chandeliers or, in the case of the Kusama Museum's piece, lighted fiberglass sculptures of Kusama's signature psychedelic pumpkins — Infinity Rooms remain one of the most captivating sensory experiences in contemporary art. Here, unlike other museums, visitors are allowed entry into the Infinity Room alone and uninterrupted for two minutes, allowing ample time for photography buffs to get that perfect, Instagram-worthy shot.

To some, Kusama's work can evoke a deep emotional response, the obsessive repetition of shapes that spread across her sculptures and canvases becoming a tangible expression of anxiety and dread. Others may simply take heart at face value, simply seeing her humorous abstractions as frivolous fun — but, that's OK, too.

Rife with meaning, and yet containing no meaning at all, the beauty of Kusama's sweep-



"Starry Pumpkin" is at the Yayoi Kusama Museum in Tokyo.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

The Yayoi Kusama Museum is at 107 Bentencho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 162-0851. It's accessible via the Tokyo Metro Tozai Line at Waseda Station (8-minute walk) or the Toei Oedo Line at Ushigome-yanagicho Station (5-minute walk).

TIMES

11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday through Sunday; also open on Japanese national holidays. The museum might be closed between exhibitions for maintenance. A calendar is available on the museum website.

COSTS

Tickets are 1,000 (about \$9.20) for adults and 600 yen (about \$3.50) for elementary and high school students. Timed tickets are required for entry and must be purchased two months in advance via the museum's website. Foreign credit cards are accepted. Tickets are released at 10 a.m. on the first day of every month.

INFORMATION

info@kusamamuseum.jp/en/exhibition/current

— Kat Bouza

ing repertoire is that it exists in opposing planes, straddling the worlds of both high art and pop art — and it's this ability to appeal to a wider audience, many of whom are unfamiliar with the tropes of the avant garde, that has allowed Kusama to sustain a relatively successful career for more than half a century.

After all, sometimes a giant lighted pumpkin is just a giant lighted pumpkin.

bouza.kat@stripes.com

App's virtual vacation



PHOTOS BY DAKE KANG/AP

Jia Weiwei plays the Japanese mobile game Travel Frog on her smartphone Feb. 7 at a bus stop in Beijing. The game has attracted a massive following in China among the younger generations.

Holidaying frog finds fans among China's harried youth

BY SHANSHAN WANG
Associated Press

Wang Zhuyin studies 10 hours a day preparing for a series of tests to obtain a U.S. physician's license. But like millions of young Chinese adults, the 26-year-old has found a new way to cope with the pressure: an online game about a frog.

A frog that's perpetually on vacation. Wang's diversion, the Japanese mobile game "Travel Frog," has attracted a massive following in China by speaking to a desire for a more passive existence among harried young people that some have termed "Buddhist style" for its desired goal of Zen-like serenity.

The game has only two scenes, a loft home and a courtyard where users can collect clover leaves to buy food and other travel supplies for their frog. There isn't much else a user can do, either. The virtual frog randomly spends time reading a book at home, eating or going on vacation around Japan. Since users have no control over their frog's behavior, waiting takes up most of the playing time.

"When your frog goes sightseeing, there is nothing you can do but go with the flow," said Wang, a native of the high-tech center of Hangzhou outside Shanghai. "This is similar to the situation young people are facing. Suffocated by stress, we learn to pretend we don't care."

The game's popularity underscores the degree of pressure Chinese millennials face in a highly competitive society where stability and opportunity have become ever more elusive.

Developed by Nagoya-based Japanese company Hit-Point, Travel Frog — also known as Tabi Kaeru — has become the most downloaded free game app in China, despite never having been translated into Chinese.



The game's simplicity has users enthralled. Wang and others describe a sense of healing when gallivanting frogs send photos from their trips, or just relax at home.

The frog "doesn't interact with you or talk to you. You just watch the frog living its own life," said Jia Weiwei, 37, who works with autistic children in Beijing. "There isn't a lot of information, which gives you plenty of space for imagination."

Jia has studied an online translation guide and checks her phone regularly to see whether her frog will surprise her by sending a photo or bringing home souvenirs.

Psychologist Hai Ming says the popularity of the game shows that human relations have declined in an increasingly data-driven digital society.

"Behind every frog-raising player is a lonely person," Hai said. "How do you externalize your loneliness, your indecision? Through the frog."

On Weibo, China's Twitter-like social media platform, the topic #TravelFrog has received more than 1.96 billion views. According to Travel Frog developer Mayuko Uemura, Travel Frog has racked up about 30 million downloads on Apple's App Store and Google Play since its launch in November. Fully 95 percent of downloads of the game from the App Store were in China.

The company is now considering producing an international version that could be tailored to appeal to local audiences, Uemura said.

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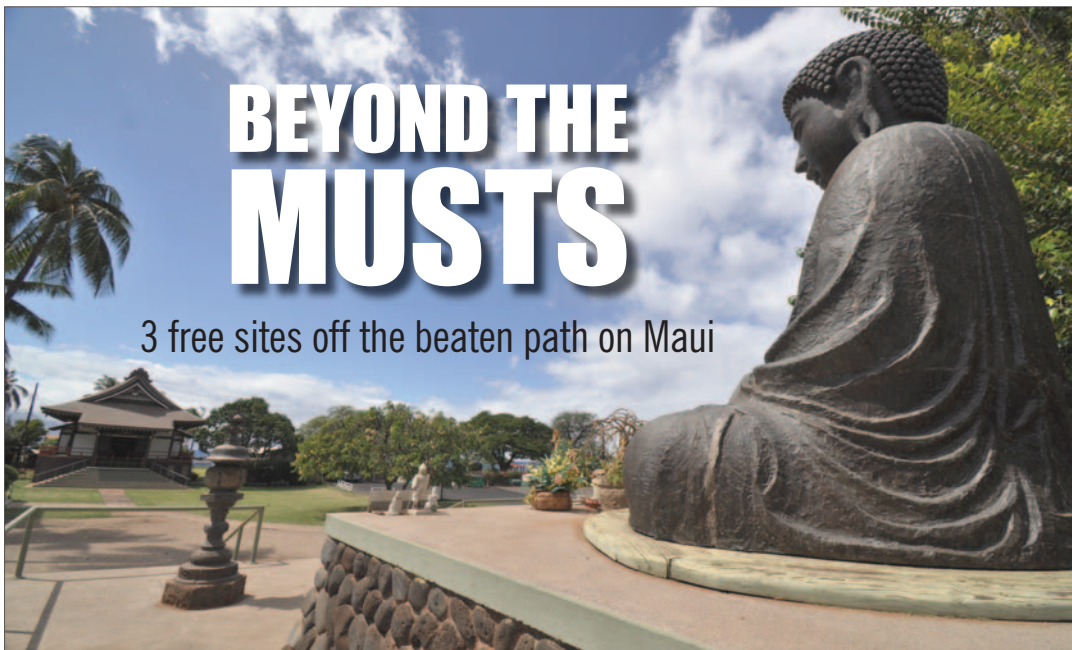
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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific

BEYOND THE MUSTS

3 free sites off the beaten path on Maui



Lahaina Jodo Mission in Lahaina on Maui, Hawaii, features one of the largest statues of Buddha, right, outside of Asia. It's free to visit the site, and donations are welcomed.

BY DANIELLE L. KIRACOFF
Stars and Stripes

If you're visiting Maui, a few sites are musts. You must visit Haleakala. You must enjoy the dancing — and the food — at the Old Lahaina Luau. You must walk through the branches of the Banyan Tree in Lahaina. And don't drive past the Maui Ocean Center, especially if you love turtles.

My husband and I had two weeks on the island paradise, so we could afford to indulge in some of the sites less traveled. Once we'd seen the "must" places, we dove deeper into the island's history and wildlife.

The town of Lahaina is a destination for most visitors to Maui — make sure to stroll First Street, eating Dole Whip, a tasty frozen soft serve pineapple-flavored dessert, and then stop in at the Lahaina Heritage Museum. But if you have the time, make the short drive away from town to stop in at Lahaina Jodo Mission.

This Japanese temple is near the ocean and features one of the largest statues of Buddha outside of Asia. Installed in 1968 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the arrival of immigrants from Japan, the statue is 12 feet high. The site also has a towering pagoda.

The grounds midweek were tranquil. We walked through of the site quietly, enjoying the peace.

While free to visit, donations are accepted and, in our case, gladly given. You'll only need about a half-hour, and ample parking is located across the street.

On our way back from a Saturday morning roaming the Maui Swap Meet (another must-do when visiting Maui that is also free), we stopped in

KNOW & GO

LAHAINA JODO MISSION

Address: Ala Moana St., Lahaina, Hawaii 96761
Website: tinyurl.com/6ym6md

KING KAMEHAMEHA GOLF CLUB

Address: 2500 Honoapiilani Hwy, Wailuku, Hawaii 96793
Website: kamehamehagolf.com

KEALIA COASTAL BOARDWALK

Address: Kealia Coastal Boardwalk, Kihei, Hawaii 96753

at a long pink building halfway up the hillside: the King Kamehameha Golf Club. It was built from the plans for a house that famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed in 1949, but never built.

A Wright building? In Maui? Yep. It's a lovely modern building, with curves easing out of the hillside.

Even if you don't know the history of the building and its plans, you can still appreciate the uniqueness of the architecture. You'll drive up the green hillside, and if you're as lucky as we were, pass a site set up for a wedding. We wandered around the building, inside and out, taking in the details. The stained glass, the round and half-round windows and the distinct pattern of wood and glass in the double entryway doors need to be

seen both from inside and outside the building.

Inside, enjoy the collection of original art. Also make sure to enjoy the views from the window — the golf course and beyond the green and blue island, to the Pacific Ocean and Haleakala mountain. The trade winds blew in when we visited, and the wind picked up.

We loved how we could pick out the huge pink building while traveling the island. We also could see it from our base in the town of Kihei.

The site is free, and will take you about 30 minutes to see.

Between the golf club and Kihei, we stopped at Kealia Coastal Boardwalk on the way back from the golf club. We also stopped the morning of our last day on Maui. It's a walkway through wetlands beside Maalaea Bay on the south edge of Maui's central valley. It's right off the main road, but far enough away from it to allow you to enjoy more peace and quiet and the nature at this beautiful spot.

The flat, easy-to-walk boardwalk isn't long — 2,200 feet — but it features incredible views of wetlands and beaches, and interesting interpretive exhibits to help visitors learn more about the birds that visit Maui or call it home. The signage helped me identify birds I'd never seen. I saw a lot of birds, apparently October is a great time for bird-watching. I was amazed at how close some of them were to the boardwalk. There were quite a few people there on Saturday morning — photographers with huge lenses to capture the birds, and people strolling in the warmth.

The site is free and has some parking, but no restrooms. Like the other two sites, it's totally worth the stop.



The main building at King Kamehameha Golf Club was crafted using designs by Frank Lloyd Wright. The pink building can be seen from around Maui.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



TRAVIS J PHOTOGRAPHY/The Washington Post

This kitchen by Studio McGee features standard subway tile with a darker grout. Subway tile is a go-to because it pairs easily with so many different styles, designer Shea McGee says. "It's also really easy to change the grout color or tile layout to shake things up."

Subway tile rises to the height of FARMHOUSE CHIC

BY MARIE ELIZABETH OLIVER
Special to The Washington Post

It's Season 4, Episode 11 of HGTV's smash hit "Fixer Upper," and Joanna Gaines is walking her husband, Chip, through her vision to transform a vacant turn-of-the-century flower shop in Waco, Texas, into a Parisian-inspired cupcake cafe.

The camera pans across a dilapidated interior, featuring peeling white paint and chartreuse wainscoting. "But all of this would be, like, subway tile, from the floor up," she says, conjuring a great wall of glossy, 3-by-6-inch ceramics.

As any loyal viewer can tell you, subway tiles — along with shiplap and farm sinks — hold a special place in the holy trinity of "Fixer Upper" renovations. But how did something eponymous with one of the most utilitarian urban spaces in America become synonymous with cozy farmhouse chic? And what is it about these basic white rectangles, which debuted more than 100 years ago, that obsesses modern homeowners?

"It does feel post-recessional," says Lindsey Waldrep, vice president of marketing at Crossville Tile. "Our lives are crazy, and there's something about those classic shapes and traditional styles that are soothing."

This calming effect is precisely what drove architects George

Heins and Christopher Grant La Farge to cast the tile in its original breakout role. Tasked with creating an inviting space for potentially fearful passengers, the men behind the design of New York City's first underground rail stations chose the white glass field tiles — named because they create a monolithic field of color — to keep the subway stations bright, said Rebecca Hagertry, a research architect at the New York Transit Museum. Inspired by Beaux Arts design and the City Beautiful movement, the architects infused the stations with 3-by-6-inch glass tile to unify the various mosaics and terra cotta units.

"The tile had many design options, was considered to be hygienic, and was affordable at the time," she said. "They were also selected as they are easy to be rinsed off, which is why there are so many round corners and smooth finishes."

That sounds like something any practical homeowner would want. And it's likely the reason the popularity of the tile surged in the 1900s and made the jump from underground tunnels into the kitchens and bathrooms of America — everywhere from New York City apartments to those original Victorian farm houses.

Keith Bieneman, managing director of Heritage Tile, says in the early 1920s, the tile we now so fondly refer to as "subway" was not

only popular, but pretty much the only option. "It was used virtually everywhere at the time — kitchens, bathrooms, it was the utilitarian tile of America," he says. "It was absolutely more ubiquitous than it is now."

According to Bieneman, the pace of growth in America at the time required precise synchronization across tile production and installation practices. This resulted in a mutual agreement among about 20 tile companies that decided upon specifications, such as a uniform size and thickness, rectified edges, flat surface and pencil-thin grout. But technology soon disrupted all that. "Things became more mass-produced, and it changed the character of the original tile work," said Bieneman, who seized upon a business opportunity to produce and distribute tile with those original specifications. In addition to commercial and residential projects, he is currently working with the Enhanced Station Initiative to restore the tilework in 33 New York City subway stations.

Even though homeowners now have limitless options when it comes to tile, there's still really only one choice for those looking to restore an older house to its prewar glory, Bieneman said.

"This is an enduring surface," he said. "If you choose something historic or authentic to that period,

you know you can live with it for years to come."

But does the longevity of these historical tiles translate to a modern loft or a home that is more "Brady Bunch" than "This Old House"?

"Subway tile has become a neutral in our industry that goes with anything," said Elle H-Millard, certified kitchen designer and trend specialist with the National Kitchen and Bath Association. "It's almost like investing in low-risk stock, it is so timeless. It isn't going to date itself."

Classic styles are maintaining their popularity because people want their renovations to last longer, she said. That's why she predicts that the deluge of white, stainless steel — and subway-tiled — kitchens overwhelming our Houzz and Pinterest streams won't slow down anytime soon.

Waldrep agrees subway tile will always be classic and emphasizes it "is not dead" but, she admitted, "A lot of people are over it." What excites her now is that designers are continuing to reinterpret the classic look with variations on the tiles' size, texture and color.

When it comes to grout, experts agree choosing something darker will take your design in a more modern and industrial direction that may become dated a little faster than the more traditional white grout and rectified edges.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



Courtesy of BB Gun Press

Mike Milosh steps out of the shadows on new Rhye album, but maintains restrained style

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

“I’m

gonna do this one kind of quiet,” Mike Milosh said, standing in a Westside Los Angeles rehearsal studio surrounded by the members of his sophisticated soul-funk band Rhye.

As the musicians eased into the relaxed groove of “Song for You,” Milosh murmured breathily about finding the courage to make oneself vulnerable to a lover. Eventually the tune picked up a bit of weight with Claire Courchene’s trombone and a beat that drummer Zach Morillo tapped out against his thighs; in response, Milosh sank slowly to his knees, as though he could restrain the music by making himself smaller.

A singer of uncommon delicacy and nuance, Rhye’s frontman and mastermind was doing what he could on a recent afternoon to protect his voice ahead of a lengthy tour behind “Blood,” the Los Angeles group’s stirring new album, which came out Feb. 2.

“I don’t want to risk straining it,” he explained.

Quiet isn’t a mere practicality for Milosh — it’s an aesthetic position.

Five years ago, the soft, refined sound of Rhye’s debut, “Woman,” made the act an instant sensation among fans and critics who compared the group to sensual R&B thinkers like Sade and Maxwell. Some of the attention came initially as a result of the mystery that Milosh and his former creative partner, producer Robin Hannibal, cultivated by keeping their faces hidden in photographs; many assumed the high-voiced

Milosh was a woman.

Even after the picture cleared, though, Rhye continued to thrive, earning a nomination for the Polar Music Prize and playing high-profile gigs at Coachella and Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Now the group, minus Hannibal, is back with its long-awaited follow-up.

“Blood” is slightly rougher around the edges than “Woman”; it’s less polished and

precise, with more air in the arrangements. But the music is still strikingly tender. And in songs like “Please” and “Song for You,” Milosh is still tweaking slow-jam convention by presenting himself as a romantic supplicant — a man eager to be vanquished by love — rather than a sexual conqueror.

“My heart’s on the pavement where we’re building you and me,” he sings with something like ecstasy in “Please.”

What’s remarkable about the singer’s commitment to this style is that the time between albums might easily have coarsened his attitude. Milosh and his wife (to whom he dedicated “Woman”) divorced, and he went through a protracted dispute with his old record label. There was also his split from Hannibal, who went on to collaborate with artists such as Wet, Kimbra and L.A.’s Niiia.

“A lot of hard things happened over the last few years,” Milosh, 42, said after the rehearsal, curled on a sofa in the studio’s dimly lighted control room. “But life is short. Why would you waste time sitting in trauma over something?”

Indeed, though “Blood” opens with a track in which the singer reflects on his divorce — it’s called “Waste” — the album soon moves on to explore the promise of new love. And not in a single-and-ready-to-mingle way. Milosh’s depiction of courtship, with its slow development of a shared universe, can feel refreshingly respectful in this age of countless news stories about callous and domineering men.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

Rhye

Blood (Loma Vista)

“Woman,” Rhye’s 2013 debut, was single-minded in its focus on seductive slow jams full of erotic longing. Mike Milosh sang in an androgynous alto and collaborated with Danish producer Robin Hannibal on arrangements that blended smooth jazz, gentle R&B and crooning soft rock. But what started as a studio project became an in-demand live band, and Hannibal opted out. Milosh helmed the long-awaited second album, “Blood,” and it’s slightly sharper, but no less seductive. There’s a little less Sade, a little more xx.

The songs loosely trace the dissolution of one relationship and the beginning of another, starting with the melancholy “Waste.” “Taste” blends strings and woodwinds with a rumbling bassline. “Please” floats on a patient trip-hop beat and some soul-jazz piano. “Count to Five” has a funk-disco groove. Unifying it all is Milosh’s gentle, pillow talk voice, full of earnest restraint. Where “Woman” focused on the bedroom, “Blood” focuses on the clubs — and the bedroom.

— Steve Kington

The Philadelphia Inquirer

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

FROM PAGE 36

"Mike really cares about fragility, which there's far too little of in basic ideas of masculinity," said Thomas Bartlett, a songwriter and producer (also known as Dovesman) who worked with him on the new record. "It was a little bit of a mission to make that fragility central — to not be embarrassed by it."

Which isn't to say the music is prudish or effete. Milosh writes vividly about the physical sensations of sex, and "Blood's" album cover shows his girlfriend's naked body. Recently, the singer said, an online ad for the record was flagged by Facebook for nudity, which got him thinking about how the impulse to objectify is a learned behavior.

"Maybe I have a really naive perspective," he admitted, "but I just thought it was a beautiful shot that embodied the intimacy of the record."

Much of that intimacy comes from Milosh's lyrics and from his vocal, recorded in whispery close-up. But "Blood" also has a sense of musicians playing together in a small room that distinguishes the album from the slicker, more digitally processed "Woman."

In "Please," for instance, Milosh proudly noted that you can hear the creak of Bartlett's piano bench — something he and Hannibal would've been older to remove from one of Rhye's earlier songs.

The singer attributed that shift to the nearly 500 concerts Rhye played around the world after its debut came out. The live work, Milosh said, was in part a means of making money in order to buy back an option on Rhye's second album. (Hannibal never performed onstage with the group, one reason he and Milosh drifted apart.)

In the studio this time Milosh was inspired to capture the peculiarities of a given moment: what happened when a certain group of players gathered in a certain place at a certain time. Beyond Bartlett, his collaborators included Nate Mercereau, known for his work with Kesha and Jay-Z, and King Henry, an L.A.-based producer with credits on songs by Beyoncé and Major Lazer; the album also features input from members of Rhye's live band.

Asked how he might define Rhye — as a group or a project or perhaps a concept — Milosh said he wouldn't, really. "I'm not married to any one identity of what it is," he said, though his singing and lyrical sensibility definitely serve as a through-line.

So, too, does his face at this point. Thinking back to Rhye's early days, Milosh insisted he wasn't trying to be enigmatic. He'd had his feelings hurt when someone made fun of his nose in an online comment, so he decided not to put himself in the act's photos.

But those five years of shows got him comfortable enough with being looked at that he appears in the music video for "Please."

And at a moment when the influence of Rhye's crafty yet tranquil sound can be detected in mainstream pop — listen to Calvin Harris' "Slide" or "Ruin the Friendship" by Demi Lovato — Milosh says he'd be open to teaming with an established star if the right person were interested in trying out his style.

Especially if it helped fund his big dream, which is to buy a farm in Canada, where he grew up, and build his own secluded recording studio, far from the distractions and the noise of L.A. and New York.

"People could fly in for a month," he said, "and just cook and hang out and go on wilderness hikes."

And enjoy the limitless quiet.



Franz Ferdinand

Always Ascending (Domino)

Franz Ferdinand's new album, "Always Ascending," its first in five years, is practically bursting with new ideas.

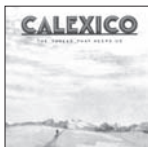
Sometimes the Scottish band sounds like it's rewriting Yaz's "Situation." The first single, "Lazy Boy," sounds like Giorgio Moroder mixed with Pink Floyd guitar riffs. And on "Huck and Jim," singer Alex Kapranos raps. So yeah, this isn't "Take Me Out (Part 2)." All this change makes sense considering everything the band has gone through since the last album. Guitarist Nick McCarthy, who co-founded the band, left in 2016 to focus on his family. The band's previous project was to form supergroup FFS with new wave pioneers Sparks. And now, Franz Ferdinand includes The 1990s' guitarist Dino Bardot and Julian Corrie, better known as producer Mieux Mieux, on keyboards.

"Huck and Jim" shows how well all the experimentation works. Not only does Kapranos rap over a trap hip-hop beat, but the rock chorus is a clever political statement about the need for universal health care that references the characters from Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

On "The Academy Award," Kapranos croons dramatically in a ballad about how regular life has now become as much of a fictional production thanks to social media, even dropping the internet error message "404 Gateway Not Found" casually into the lyrics. In "Lois Lane," Kapranos delves into the life of a journalist and the reasons for the choices she has made in her life over a sprightly synthesizer riff, before describing the "over-30 singles night" by repeating "It's bleak" like a mantra.

Nothing is simple here. Even "Lazy Boy" — ostensibly about a boy who is, well, lazy — twists into something complex. But there is a unifying theme: The struggles of everyday life are unavoidable, but Franz Ferdinand believes they can be overcome by dance-driven hopefulness and the mindset that life is "Always Ascending."

— Glenn Gamboa
Newsday



Calxico

The Thread That Keeps Us (Anti-)

If the atomic scientists were lending to music when they recently moved the Doomsday Clock up to just two minutes to midnight, it might well have been Calxico's "The Thread That Keeps Us." Poignantly apocalyptic in places but with glimmers of hope and romance, the album would also be ideal for moving the hands of the clock a few minutes farther from disaster, hopefully soon.

Now a septet, the Tucson, Ariz.-based Calxico recorded their ninth studio album in northern California and the change has done them good.

Opener and first single "End of the World With You" starts like a 1987 U2 song with a touch of The Replacements and sets the tone with mentions of "the age of extremes."

Calxico taps into the calamity of the times on "The Thread That Keeps Us," but finds that not all of the tapestry is in tatters.

— Pablo Gorondi
Associated Press



Dashboard Confessional

Crooked Shadows (Fueled by Ramen)

It's been more than eight years since the last Dashboard Confessional album, but "Crooked Shadows" erases that gap quickly, as singer-songwriter Chris Carrabba catches us up on his life like an old friend.

The songwriting is as personal and raw as ever, although the situations have changed. "We never learned to keep our voices down, no," Carrabba declares in the anthemic "We Fight," as he tries to remind people what an indie rock scene can be. "We only learned to shout, so, we fight our way in and we fight our way out."

While early Dashboard classics like "Hands Down" are so personal that it's hard to imagine anyone but Carrabba singing them, new songs such as "Open My Eyes" could be hits for anyone from country singers to pop divas. "Crooked Shadows" puts Dashboard in the mainstream, showing how much both Carrabba and the mainstream have changed for the better.

— Glenn Gamboa
Newsday



MGMT

Little Dark Age (Columbia)

If MGMT's first album in four years gets really trippy, there's a good reason. One song was apparently created during an acid trip.

If that's what it takes to get the creative juices flowing for bandmates Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser, we're fine with it. MGMT have once more delivered an off-kilter, challenging and very addictive album with "Little Dark Age."

There's a general sense of unease in the lyrics, both socially and technologically, and the cover seems to riff off Edward Munch's unnerving "The Scream."

Perfect for an album in 2018, VanWyngarden explores tech addiction. "I'm constantly swiping and tapping / it's never relaxing," he sings in the opening song.

The album ends on a happier note with "Hand It Over," which has a Beach Boys feel. By that time, you'll likely be exhausted, thrilled and spent — like encountering a contact high.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press



Franz Ferdinand

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WEEKEND: BOOKS

Eggers' coffee saga good to the last drop

By JIM HIGGINS

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

When Mokhtar Alkhanshali first dreamed of reviving the glorious coffee heritage of Yemen, he had never sipped a cup of the fancy joe that baristas pour.

The 24-year-old was working as a doorman at a San Francisco luxury apartment building, pondering how to cover his debts and move forward. But, incredibly, within a few years he brought that dream to life, overcoming one onrushing obstacle after another, including being taken into custody at gunpoint multiple times.

There's a long list of people for whom I would enthusiastically recommend Dave Eggers' "The Monk of Mokha," his nonfiction chronicle of Mokhtar's success: people who love coffee, because the book is filled with fascinating details on the subject; people from Yemen; fans of Eggers' writing, of course; and in particular, anyone who has ever dreamed of starting a business, especially an international one.

While this might not be how they teach it at Harvard Business School,

"The Monk of Mokha" is one of the most exciting business case studies I have ever read. Mokhtar draws on every bit of past experience, including lessons learned and people met in his teen years, in his pursuit of serving Yemeni coffee to American sippers.

Born into a family of immigrants, Mokhtar grew up poor in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. He was a restless kid who preferred minor mischief to school, but he loved to read (Eggers lists one chapter

"The Kid Who Stole Books"). Mokhtar had teen successes selling Banana Republic clothes, women's shoes and Honda cars, but painful reverses left him grateful for the doorman gig.

Then one day, Mokhtar's friend Miriam drew his attention to something across the street from the luxury tower: "There's a statue of a Yemeni dude drinking a big

cup of coffee," she texted him. It was in the courtyard of a building that had been built by the Hills Bros. coffee company, whose innovations in vacuum packing helped make coffee popular in this country.

Mokhtar dug into the history and lore of coffee, including the legend that a Sufi holy man in Mokha, a Yemen port city, was the first person to brew coffee.

"I will resurrect the art of Yemeni coffee and restore it to prominence throughout the world," he told Miriam. After working up an enthusiastic mission statement and strategy, he showed it to a savvy mentor. "Mokhtar, I have to be honest with you," the mentor told him. "This is the ghettoest business plan I've ever seen."

But Mokhtar kept going. He apprenticed with coffee experts and, on his second attempt, earned his Q Grading qualification, the first person of Yemeni heritage to do so.

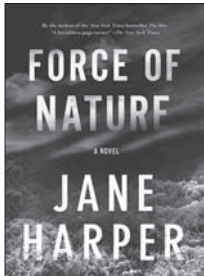
His plan degraded on quality: Mokhtar had to source highly graded coffee from Yemen that could be sold at premium outlets in the United States. He traveled across Yemen, persuading farmers to grow coffee instead of khat, boosting pay and bettering

working conditions for women who painstakingly sorted coffee fruit.

Many things went wrong: For example, an old farmer who made some of the best coffee Mokhtar ever found died unexpectedly. "Too many of his best ideas occurred far after they would have been the most useful," Mokhtar laments, though Eggers' account reveals Mokhtar to be quick-witted and resourceful.

In the story's climactic pages, Mokhtar has to find his way out of war-ravaged Yemen with precious coffee samples destined for a trade show that could make or break his financing. He barely avoids airstrikes, is captured and released several times by violent militias (i.e., "Six Armed Men at the Foot of the Bed"), and survives other harrowing experiences, including crossing the strait between Yemen and Djibouti in a tiny, flat-hulled boat.

Incredibly, Mokhtar, with help he acknowledges from so many people, made his dream reality. His company, Port of Mokha, imports and sells some of the most expensive and highest-rated coffee in the world.



Force of Nature

Jane Harper

Executives and assistants of Melbourne accounting firm Bailey Tennants go on a three-night retreat to the rugged Giralang Ranges. The men's team returns ahead of schedule, but a search party has to be dispatched when the women's team is six hours late. When the women do return, each one is injured. And one woman, Alice Russell, is missing.

Federal agents Aaron Falk and Carmen Cooper are sent to investigate Alice's disappearance. They have a stake in finding Alice. She's key in uncovering an elaborate money-laundering scheme that began with the founder of the firm and has been continued by his children, brother and sister Daniel and Jill Bailey, who are on the retreat.

Lost in the bush land with food and water dwindling, every personal and professional slight is magnified. Adding to the tension, this part of the wild was once the killing ground for a serial murderer whose son is rumored to share his father's proclivities.

Harper keeps the focus more on her characters' motivations, skillfully alternating between the search and what happened on each day of the retreat.

—Oline H. Cogdill/AP



Mothers of Sparta

Dawn Davies

What are the significant moments that make up the story of a regular person? Davies eloquently answers this question in each chapter.

"Sparta" opens with Davies detailing her struggle with anxiety. Davies dropped out of college and moved to Boston, where she attempted to launch a business.

During this foray, her boyfriend died in a tragic accident while visiting his home country of Brazil.

Davies has her second run-in with death as she watches a Northeastern University student killed by an impaired driver. Davies held the dying girl's hand and sang "Jesus Loves Me." Still, "Mothers of Sparta" isn't just a grim recounting of all the suffering that Davies has experienced. There are funny moments — such as the time she tried to save money on her daughter's wedding by ordering a designer dress from China.

Some of the most compelling writing is on the subject of parenting. Davies' ruminations about being a mom are all over the place — happy and sad, funny and serious — but they're sure to resonate with readers who have kids.

—Tracee M. Herbaugh/AP



Hellbent

Gregg Hurwitz

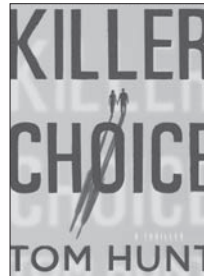
A call for help quickly turns personal for former government-assassin-turned-vigilante Evan Smoak, aka Orphan X.

He's shocked to receive a video message from Jack Johns, his mentor and the man who recruited him into the elite Orphan program. He watches as Johns, a man he cherishes almost like a father, is brutally thrown out of an airplane in midair. Torn apart by his sudden death at the hands of another Orphan who wants nothing more than to eliminate all the others in the program, Smoak knows he has to stop a man named Van Sciver once and for all. It doesn't help that this man responsible for Johns' death is also the new head of the Orphan program.

Smoak retrieves a package that Johns left for him and is brutally attacked by a teenage girl. She has elite skills that show Smoak that she had also been trained by Johns. It soon dawns on him that the package is this young girl and he has to protect her from the killers closing in on both of them.

Hurwitz is a terrific thriller writer, and with this series he gets better with each installment.

—Jeff Ayers/AP



Killer Choice

Tom Hunt

Gary's pregnant wife, Beth, has a brain tumor. It's going to take \$200,000 they don't have to save her. Fittingly, that's how much a drug dealer across town is willing to pay Gary for committing murder.

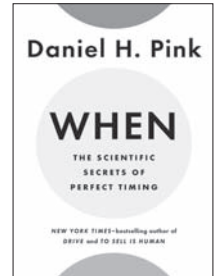
Gary, intent on saving his wife's life, enters an underworld and attempts to keep his excursions under wraps.

The price tag for Beth's only chance of survival originates from a clinical trial in Germany. However, readers might be left wondering if the couple would be better served by searching for cheaper accommodations in Europe, as the \$200,000 includes airfare and lodging. The treatment's lackluster odds — thus far it's worked on 40 percent of a 25-person sample — also dampen the mood.

Despite the color-by-numbers feel of much of the book, the author delivers some surprises. As our hero burrows into a life of crime, his unfamiliarity with violence provides plenty of opportunities for failure.

With uncomplicated prose, simple setups and straightforward characters, plot drives this thriller.

—Christina Ledbetter/AP



When

Daniel H. Pink

Pink sets out to "unearth the hidden science of timing" — to uncover it as a significant if unrecognized player in our lives. He highlights a study of Danish schoolchildren that found that those who took their yearly standardized test in the morning performed better than those who took it in the afternoon. The p.m. slump is real, which is why Pink advises against scheduling a doctor's appointment in the day. According to a study, doctors found an average of more than 1.1 polyps during colonoscopies performed at 11 a.m. By 2 p.m., it dropped to barely half that number, even though the patients ate the same food. What does mitigate the slide, Pink explains, are breaks. Judges rule in favor of prisoners about 65 percent of the time early in the day, but by late morning, that rate drops to nearly zero, regardless of the facts of the case, researchers have found.

Pink explains why people whose age ends in 9 are overrepresented in first-time marathoners and why singing in a group boosts endorphins and immunity. "When" is engaging, conversational and tightly edited, making it an easy yet important read.

—Rasha Madkour/AP

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“Wonder”: This is the kind of movie that should be shown to young and old as a life lesson about how to deal with people who appear to be different. It has a wondrous message about tolerance, acceptance, understanding and respect. There’s no guarantee the message would register with all moviegoers, but social ignorance can be cured one person at a time. Auggie (Jacob Tremblay) has been home schooled all his young life by his mom (Julia Roberts). That was necessary because of the physical complications the youngster was born with that required him to have a long string of surgeries to correct many of the problems. It’s decided that middle school is the perfect time for Auggie to start attending classes with other children. Too often films that offer such lofty visions are presented in a demanding way. “Wonder” is not one of those movies as director Stephen Chbosky manages to make some very important points while not sacrificing the entertainment elements. He does this through a script lovingly based on the best-selling book by R.J. Palacio and a cast that can deliver emotional moments without being melodramatic.



LIONSGATE/AP

Jacob Tremblay, right, and Julia Roberts star in the movie “Wonder,” now out on DVD.

“Roman J. Israel, Esq.”: The role Denzel Washington attacks with vigor is that of a lawyer with a brilliant and beautiful mind who is more comfortable poring over law books than dealing with social situations. When his law partner dies, Roman is forced to leave the environment he has enjoyed for decades to search for other work. He ends up in a high-end law firm run by George Pierce (Colin Farrell), a former student of Roman’s old boss. He has problems adjusting, however, and problems arise.

“The Deuce: The Complete First Season”: The HBO series about pornography and prostitution in New York in the ‘70s and ‘80s recalls a world that should be seen as one of America’s great shames, but it’s hard to ignore because out of it came so many political, social and business changes. These behind the scenes nature shows the dark matter as something of honor but as the unflinching, dehumanizing and destructive world that existed and remains a part of America’s dark past. The series offers no excuses, takes no prisoners and never apologizes. There are times when the darkness feels so overwhelming any relief would be welcomed. But, “The Deuce” draws strength from how this isn’t a cushioned look at a sociological abyss but thrives on being as blunt and real as necessary.

Also available on DVD:

“The Sinner”: Young woman commits an act of violence on a crowded beach for no apparent reason. Jessica Biel stars.

“Hellraiser: Judgment”: Pinhead returns in the next chapter of the Hellraiser series. “Pokémon the Movie: I Choose You!” Ash Ketchum is permitted to become a Pokémon Trainer.

“The Ballad of Lefty Brown”: After his partner is murdered, Brown vows to avenge his friend’s death. Bill Pullman stars.

“Line 41”: Documentary about a Holocaust survivor who returns to Poland to learn what happened to his family.

— Rick Bentley/Tribune News Service



HBO/TNS

Jessica Williams and Phoebe Robinson are the stars of HBO’s “2 Dope Queens.”

Funny & Informal

Popular podcast ‘2 Dope Queens’ arrives on HBO

BY ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times

Comedy-wise, we are in the Age of the Podcast, of the hangout — group activities that go where they may. The digital era has let a thousand Algonquin Round Tables bloom and invited the wide world to eavesdrop. Quite often these sessions are recorded in front of a live audience, amplifying the feeling of community, of a movement, of belonging.

Such is the case with “2 Dope Queens,” the 2-year-old WNYC-sponsored popular podcast of writer-comedian-actors Jessica Williams (late of “The Daily Show”) and Phoebe Robinson (“Broad City,” “Search Party”), which has been transferred to television by HBO for a four-episode run. Network money gives them a fancy set — a rooftop overlooking the New York skyline — a wig and wardrobe budget and a big, elegant space in which to play, the Kings Theatre in Brooklyn, with no loss of the original’s scrappy delightfulness.

Like the podcast, and many other podcasts, “2 Dope Queens” mixes tussling banter — there are few jokes but much funniness — with stand-up spots and interviews. The guest comedians may be better or lesser known (Baron Vaughn and Rhea Butcher are among the former group here); the interview subjects are often better known, lending shine to the show. The joke that brings out the guest in the two HBO episodes I’ve seen is the request for a stagehand: Jon Stewart arrived to

dust the set, Sarah Jessica Parker to help with a “shoe situation.” And the crowd goes wild.

The beauty of these shows is their informality or, in any case, the impression of informality they give. Good comedy always seems to come from the moment, when you can’t tell the old material from the improvised.

“Shall we get this show started?” Robinson asks 11 minutes into an episode. While there are few cutaways to the crowd — which is young and comes in many colors — there are lovely reverse shots, shooting past the performers into the theater, knitting watcher and watched.

The rest of the time, the enthusiasm is audible. Director Tig Notaro — whose own comedy evenings at Largo in Los Angeles have something of this flavor — catches all the liveliness.

The premiere episode, which begins with a cold open in which Williams and Robinson, unrecognized, buy the last two tickets to their own debut — “the state of black-on-black aggression right now is insane,” says Williams to the black ticket taker — takes New York as its subject. The second episode is about hair, followed by ones about naked men and “bierds,” black nerds, which the hosts have elsewhere accounted themselves. There are multiple references to “Game of Thrones.”

Parker, in the hair episode, is introduced as a hair icon. (“Some people look really perplexed by that,” she says, looking into the room.) She had done her own hair and makeup because

“I didn’t really understand the magnitude of the situation.” (Most of the episode is about the hosts’ hair, not hers.) Robinson and Williams are fans of “Sex and the City,” and so there was brunch, eventually shared with the audience — pizza is eaten in the “New York” episode — and excited unexpected bonding over Costco, because Parker recognizes something on the brunch cart as being available there.

The listener does not need to share demographic history with the comedian (writes the white guy); comedy brings the news from a foreign land. It’s educational. The hosts are smart, sweet and centered enough that they can handle the lowest topics in a way that feels innocent and refreshing, even demonstrating sexual positions or chugging wine (Williams) or describing men on the subway who seem to be asleep but also seem to be masturbating (Robinson).

Asked for “some of your craziest New York moments,” Stewart begins, “Well, I was pretending I was asleep on a subway once.”

“Do you find that now you go to parties a lot, like roof parties and stuff?” Williams asks her semi-retired former boss, noting their stage set.

“Jess, let me ask you a question — when did you stop knowing me? ... There’s not a lot that can get me out of the house.”

“For these cocoa Kalaesli,” Williams says, “yasss.”

“I don’t know what that meant,” says Stewart, “but yes.” Yes.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

How sweet it was!



Why we crave sugar, and how to beat the habit

By CASEY SEIDENBERG ■ *Special to The Washington Post*

Sugar has been shown to have an effect on the brain similar to that of an addictive drug. No wonder it's not easy to quit.

Not easy, but not impossible, although there are a few questions to answer before weaning yourself off sugar. First, is your blood sugar unbalanced? Next, are you getting enough of the right nutrients? Last, do you sleep enough, and are you able to manage stress? The answers to those questions will help you figure out what, specifically, you need to address to beat sugar successfully.

Blood sugar issues

Many sugar cravings stem from a blood sugar imbalance. When your body ingests sugar, your blood sugar spikes and your body releases insulin to lower it to a safer level. If the insulin brings your blood sugar level a bit too low, as often happens, your body craves foods that will raise it and increase your energy. You're on a blood sugar roller coaster, and it's hard to get off it. The key to balancing blood sugar is to eat foods that prevent too much insulin from being released, such as protein and healthy fats, and consuming only small amounts of sugar (if any). It's also important to eat regular meals and snacks, because blood sugar drops when you skip a meal.

Cover the essential nutrients

Protein and fat are crucial to kicking a sugar habit. Unlike sugar, healthy fats and protein provide slow and steady forms of energy, more like a flat, newly paved road rather than that glucose-flavored roller coaster. When your body doesn't find sugar for fuel, it turns to fats, so eating plenty of healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, avocados and olive oil can help your body adjust to getting its energy elsewhere. Protein helps you feel satiated, which can reduce hunger and cravings, and many of the amino acids in protein help build the brain chemicals

— such as dopamine — that make us feel good. When we feel balanced and energized, we are less likely to seek a sugar high.

Other important nutrients while trying to wean yourself from sugar include fiber, which slows digestion and stabilizes blood sugar; iron, which when depleted can cause low energy and cravings; and the energizing B vitamins, which are often depleted by sugar consumption and stress.

Lifestyle red flags

Some cravings emanate not from your belly, but from your brain, as a result of lifestyle. Stress causes the hormone cortisol to flood your body, releasing glucose from your liver, which in turn raises your blood sugar. We know fluctuations in blood sugar can cause cravings, so being constantly stressed is like begging for trouble. Poor sleep also can trigger excess eating, including increased sugar consumption, as you seek energy to combat your fatigue. It's critical to get enough sleep when trying to cut back on sugar.

Sometimes we experience cravings that are nothing but a habit. Perhaps throughout your childhood, you watched your parents overeat on Thanksgiving, so now you do the same, binging on pie, for example, even when you are not hungry. Or perhaps you've spent decades reaching for chocolate to combat stress, or relying on ice cream to

soothe sadness. Listen to cravings and try to determine their root: True hunger, emotional eating or habit.

Hacks to outsmart cravings

Here are some tricks to help you successfully kick the sugar habit:

1. Start with a solid breakfast. The less sugar you eat in the morning, the more balanced you will be all day. High-protein breakfasts have been proven to reduce cravings.
 2. Plan your meals in advance, to prevent dips in blood sugar.
 3. Dehydration can make you feel hungry, so drink plenty of water.
 4. When you crave sweets, wait 10 minutes and change your environment. Take a walk, or get into a project. Perhaps you can distract yourself out of at least one sugar fix.
 5. To satisfy your sugar cravings in a more healthful way, turn to vegetables such as sweet potatoes, squash, beets and carrots. Other naturally sweet foods include coconut, bananas, frozen grapes, dates, vanilla, raw cacao and cinnamon (which has been shown to reduce sugar cravings by helping to manage insulin sensitivity). Berries are another option, and their sugars are released more slowly than those of other fruits. And high-fiber foods such as broccoli, cauliflower and kale make you feel full longer than many quickly digested foods such as cereal, bagels and other simple carbohydrates.
 6. Avoid artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame, saccharin and sucralose, which have been shown to increase sugar cravings.
 7. Trick your body by eating something sour when you want something sweet. The sour flavor can stimulate the taste buds and distract you from the sugar craving.
- If sugar has already hijacked your body and you want off the bumpy ride, hold on tight because you will likely have those druglike withdrawal symptoms for two or three days, and the cravings will likely remain for at least the first week. After that, sweat the negative thoughts and hankings will dissipate, and hopefully you can take off your seat belt and enjoy a smoother ride.

WEEKEND: FAMILY

‘They’ve been invisible’

Professor studies role of black grandmothers in society

By NICOLE BRODEUR

The Seattle Times

Midea? Big Momma? Please.

Those movie characters may have made comical, cultural icons of black grandmothers, but they don't do them justice. They're not even played by actual women.

"If that's what you're getting, you're missing what a lot of these women bring to bear on their families and communities," said LaShawnDe Pittman, an assistant professor of American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington.

"We shouldn't be talking about the black experience without talking about black grandmothers."

Pittman did her doctoral dissertation on black grandmothers: Their health. Their income issues. Their place in society as a stabilizing, nurturing safety net for families that, without them, might very well fall apart.

"Friends started telling me their stories," she said, "and I became this grandmother-obsessive. And I thought, 'This is a thing.'"

Pittman has turned the stories into a website called RealBlackGrandmothers.com.

The site is a place where people can post testimonials about their grandmothers, and archive the experiences of the women "who have played such an important, and unsung role in American society," Pittman said.

During Black History Month, the site will feature testimonials from 20 people whom Pittman considers "essential leaders" including Naama More from "America's Next Top Model" and Seattle chef Edouardo Jordan.

"We are relying on these women more and more, and their representation online is not representative of their role in the world."

It is a role they serve with less money and more health problems than the general population.

Consider: Around 7.6 percent of black women have heart disease, compared to 5.8 percent of white women and 5.6 percent of Mexican American women, according to CDC.

In 2016, around 46 of every 100 black women died from strokes, compared to 35 of every 100 white women.

They have a higher rate of diabetes, for developing breast cancer, and are more likely to die from cancer than white women.

If that isn't enough, Pittman said, "they're more likely to be poor."

Black women have high labor-participation rates. They start working younger and work longer, often as domestic and agricultural workers. They're more likely to not receive Social Security benefits through their work.

And, according to an analysis by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, black women who work full-time and year-round earn 64 cents on the dollar compared with white women, the largest group in the labor force. Black women also experience



COURTESY OF LASHAWNDE PITTMAN/THS

"We shouldn't be talking about the black experience without talking about black grandmothers," says LaShawnDe Pittman, right.

high unemployment "and are over-represented in jobs with little job security, few benefits and limited opportunity for advancement," the IWPR said.

This continues into old age, when black women are even more vulnerable economically and tend to assume greater caregiving responsibilities.

"So they're doing more with less, and with impaired health," Pittman said.

All this, while bearing witness to some of the biggest problems soci-

Pittman did her doctoral dissertation on black grandmothers: Their health.

Their income issues. Their place in society as a stabilizing, nurturing safety net for families that, without them, might very well fall apart.

ety has faced: Drug abuse. Racism. Mass incarceration.

"People love to focus on the problems of the family," Pittman said. "But those problems didn't create themselves. They're born of the racism in this country."

While working on her dissertation at Northwestern University and as a post-doctoral student at the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan, Pittman interviewed 77 black grandmothers on Chicago's South Side about their history, their health and their role in the family.

"They were so surprised I wanted to hear their stories," Pittman said. "They've been invisible. This website, I hope, will erase that."

Pittman's interest in black grandmothers started with her own, a woman named Warnella Wells, a nurse's aide who lived in Kankakee, Ill.

Pittman's mother, Joyce, got pregnant with her when she was 15 and gave birth to her when she was 16. Where was her father?

"That's somebody else's scholarship project," Pittman cracked. The three women all lived together until Pittman's mother decided to "establish her own household," Pittman said, even though she didn't have a job.

"That's what you need black grandmothers for," Pittman said. "She was accountability for my mom. Black grandmothers are the checks and balances for their kids about how they are raising their kids."

Pittman is also working on a book called "Black Grandmothers From Slavery to the Present," which she believes to be the first scientific study of its kind.

Pittman sees endless possibilities sprouting from the website. With the help of archivist Sara Daise and some summer interns, Pittman has created a place where people can read stories, sayings, news stories and wisdom.

She hopes to get testimonials from African-American artists like authors Toni Morrison and Alice Walker; Oprah Winfrey and Nikki Giovanni; and to inspire exhibits about black grandmothers in African-American history museums here and in Washington, D.C.

"I want RealBlackGrandmothers to be the go-to place for all things black grandmothers," she said.

Pittman wants people to use it to document their family histories; educators to use it to teach about grandmothers' roles in African-American history and culture. She wants students, artists and entertainers to plumb it for research and ideas.

"Even those just looking for inspiration," Pittman said. "These incredible women are sure to provide it."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



When kids are quiet, something's not right

"Kids..." I'd yelled into our playroom on a regular basis when our children were small, "what's going on in there?!"

Usually, I'd heard roughhousing — giggling, knocks against the wall, creaking couch springs, yips and squeals. You'd think the innocent sounds of our children playing would warm our hearts, but as experienced parents, Francis and I knew that wholesome noises often lead to bonked heads, chipped teeth and poked eyes.

However, there were other times when we hadn't heard squeals, bumps or creaking floorboards. No singing, hammering, smacking or crying. No Barbies being thrown, sippy cups hitting the floor or lamps getting knocked over.

What we heard was something far more terrifying: total silence.

Let's face it, kids are noisy. They sniffle, babble, fidget, fiddle and whine. Silence is a clear sign that something's wrong.

Case in point: One night, when our family was stationed in Virginia. Francis and I let our 5-year-old son, Hayden, and his 2-year-old sister, Anna, watch a video in the playroom before bedtime.

Back in those days, we saved every peaceful second that a half-hour video provided as if it was some kind of luxurious spa treatment. As soon as we popped a tape into the VCR, we would dash down the stairs to melt into our couch cushions. With the doors open, we could hear the murmur of the often-played video and the sounds of our kids tinkering with toys. After countless nights of the same routine, we knew exactly when our time was up.

But on this night, the half hour flew by without us noticing. Twenty minutes or so after "Arthur" was over, I nudged Francis. "Uh oh... I don't hear the kids."

"Hayden and Anna!" Francis yelled up the playroom stairs. "What's going on in there?"

Soon we heard little padded feet scurrying and intermittent giggling. Hayden and Anna slunk downstairs, and appeared before us with their heads bowed in guilt. When they looked up, we saw that they each had green marker scribbled all over their hands and faces.

"What have you two been doing?" we demanded. Anna's enormous brown eyes flashed to her older brother.

"Playing," Hayden said.

"Hayden and Anna, you're not supposed to use markers on skin," I scolded. Reaching for a tub of baby wipes, I noticed green marks on Anna's neck that dipped below the collar of her footed pajamas. I unzipped her pj's and gasped.

Anna chest, belly, arms, legs, feet, hands and back were a green, inky mess. A quick inspection of Hayden revealed that, other than his face and hands, he was marker-free. The culprit was obvious.

"Hayden! Why did you scribble all over your little sister?" Francis pressed.

"Not me," Hayden shrugged.

"Then how did you name get in the middle of Anna's back? Do you expect us to believe that she put it there? She can't even read yet!" I barked.

We looked down at our sheepish kids, realizing that Hayden had pulled off a classic big brother prank on his adoring little sister. Francis and I tried to maintain a serious demeanor, but one side glance at each other was all it took to get us laughing.

Pretty soon, all four of us were cracking up. Anna had no idea what was so funny, but she laughed along with us.

After a second round of baths to remove the washable marker, we tucked them into bed for the night. We stopped by the playroom to turn out the lights, still smiling about their shenanigans.

The grins drained from our faces when we saw what the kids had really been up to. Somehow, in the time it took for us to realize that the "Arthur" video had ended, Hayden had managed to create a mural of scribbles on all four walls of the playroom in every color of the rainbow. And he did it in complete silence.

Whoever said, "Children should be seen, not heard," clearly wasn't a parent.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

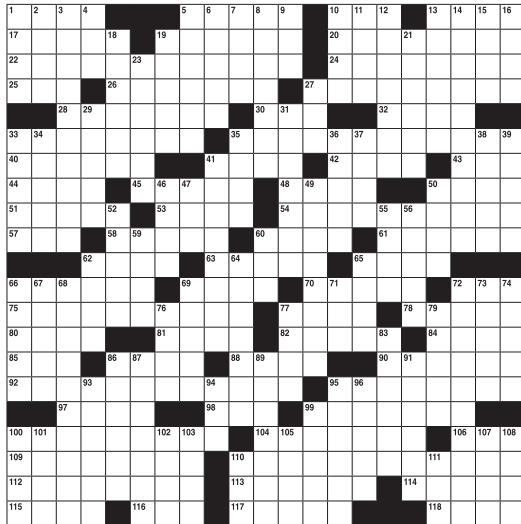
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PARONOMASIA

BY MATT GINSBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS**
- 1 Like most seamen, supposedly
5 Writer who said "Women are meant to be loved, not to be understood"
10 Holiday celebrating the arrival of spring
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20 Handel's "Messiah," e.g.
22 Narrow passages for killer whales?
24 Kitchen nooks
25 Zodiac feline
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27 Fable about smoked salmon?
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32 "Yeah, right"
33 Raised some vegetables?
35 Decrease in the number of people named Gerald?
40 Hot Wheels maker
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43 Gulgah of "The Return of the Living Dead"
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51 First mass consumer product offering Wi-Fi
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54 Belts for a Chinese leader?
57 Chaney who was called "The Man of a Thousand Faces"
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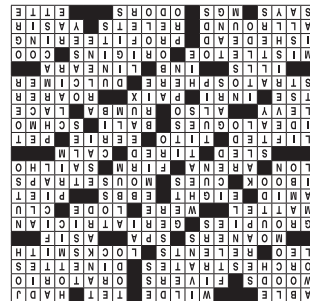
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GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



FACES

BY SANDY COHEN
Associated Press

The kooky caveman characters that come to life in "Early Man" have been kicking around in Nick Park's imagination for decades.

Long before he created Wallace and Gromit, Park was taken with Ray Harryhausen's animated dinosaurs in the 1966 Raquel Welch movie "One Million Years B.C."

"I just couldn't believe real dinosaurs moving around with people," Park said, recalling the film he saw as an 11-year-old that would inspire his love of animation. "So I guess that sort of thing has been in the back of my mind for many years."

"Early Man" translates Park's vision into an epic claymation adventure about a tribe of colorful cave people who stake the future of their homeland on a soccer showdown, despite not knowing how to play. An ambitious young caveman, Dug, and his loyal pet wart-hog, Hognob, believe the plucky tribe can prevail.

"I've never seen a prehistoric underdog sports movie before," Park mused.

U.K.-based Aardman Studios tapped its largest production team yet — with nearly 40 animators and sets working at once — to make "Early Man," which uses stop-motion animation techniques essentially unchanged since Harryhausen's day.

It's a slow and painstaking process to bring clay characters to life. "We've used some of the most advanced filmmaking techniques in post-production, together with stop-motion, which is as old as cinema itself," said animation director Martin Crossingham.

For "Early Man," Crossingham (or "stop-frame," as Park calls it) creates the illusion of movement through a series of still images. For "Early Man," Aardman's team of artists built a cast of puppets based on Park's sketches that serve as the film's actors. Each seven-inch-tall silicone puppet has a jointed metal skeleton inside so it can move.

"They're like expensive action figures," Crossingham said.

The faces are made of modeling clay except for the noses and eyes, which are hand-painted and serve as "grab points" for animators while changing the puppet's expression. Moldable brows and more than two dozen removable and interchangeable mouths allow for a variety of looks.

Animators pose the puppets for each frame — every movement, every gesture — with 24 frames in each second of film. Mouth movements are synched to pre-recorded vocal performances (Eddie Redmayne, Tom Hiddleston and Maisie Williams lend their talents here). For every shot, the puppets are bolted into place on exquisitely detailed sets that stand about two feet high.

Capturing just a few frames could be a full day's work. "Getting about five seconds of finished film is a really good week," said animation director Will Becher.

Because the process is so time-consuming, artists make duplicates of every set and puppet so multiple animators can work on various shots simultaneously.

"The art department has to be really on their game keeping the continuity," Crossingham said.

"Because of that, we use technical drawings for everything — the puppets, the locations. Everything is documented so that we can reproduce it, and that gives us flexibility in working."

To show the disparate team of animators just what they're looking for, Park, Crossingham and Becher act out each scene on video, highlighting comic timing

and behavioral specifics. Park confessed that sometimes he can see reflections of himself in the characters' movements.

As director, he was involved with every aspect of "Early Man," from character and story development to finding just the right color for the soccer field's grass. Park also personally worked with the vocal performers, something he wasn't always comfortable doing.

"I used to find it quite nerve-racking working with actors, especially if they were quite famous actors," he said. "I find it much easier to manipulate a puppet or a clay character, because they do as they're told. And if they don't, you can squish their head in or whatever you want. With actors, you have

to be a little bit more tactful."

Park voiced Hognob himself.

While the techniques of stop-motion animation haven't changed much since their inception, the technology around them has. The puppets are now made of a state-of-the-art plasticine material, and most sketches and renderings are done in the computer.

As for the film itself, Park said he tried to use as little digital intervention as possible: "It's always lovely to keep the sense of it's all been done in front of camera and not an effect."

Park might have been dreaming about "Early Man"-type characters since he was 11, but his first sketches for the film date back to 2010.

Netflix hoards talent in big-ticket deal for 'Glee' creator Murphy

From wire reports

Netflix signed Ryan Murphy, creator of hits such as "American Horror Story" and "Glee," to a contract to make series and films, wresting him away from 21st Century Fox, which is in the midst of reordering of the TV business.

Murphy and his production company will get \$300 million over five years, according to a person familiar with the matter. He follows Shonda Rhimes, the former ABC megaproducer behind "Grey's Anatomy" and "Scandal," and Mark Millar, the comic-book writer who is rapidly expanding roster of creative talent Netflix is opening its wallet to assemble.

The Murphy deal is likely to add more pressure on Fox and its deal partner Walt Disney Co., which had both been lobbying to retain him, to show they have the right strategy to fend off their big-spending rival from Silicon Valley. The financial terms of

Murphy's contract are also likely to add to the chorus of Netflix skeptics who argue the company's \$8 billion-a-year programming budget isn't sustainable over the long term.

Murphy, 52, had been expected to resign with Fox but began to waver after the company agreed to sell much of its entertainment assets to Disney in a \$52.4 billion deal, people familiar with the matter told Bloomberg in December. Disney Chief Executive Officer Bob Iger personally called Murphy after the acquisition was announced to assure him Disney wanted the kind of edgy programming Murphy produces, Murphy said last month.

But the Disney deal emboldened Netflix, Amazon.com and at least two other parties to pursue Murphy, the people said.

Netflix will burn through about \$4 billion cash this year, and plans to increase its borrowing in a quest to rapidly assemble a consistently fresh library of programming

to keep its 117.6 million subscribers.

Other news

■ A witness says actor **Luke Wilson** pulled an injured woman from a car after a Los Angeles crash that killed a 71-year-old man who was in a Ferrari with professional golfer Bill Haas. Tattoo artist Sean Heirigs says he was directly behind the Ferrari and saw the whole accident. He says Wilson, whose car was only clipped in the three-car collision, "was the hero" and "led the charge" in helping the victims. He says Wilson feared the woman's car was about to catch fire. She was screaming but couldn't get out because her leg was trapped. Wilson figured out they could remove the woman through the back of her car, and he and Heirigs removed her.

■ "Maze Runner" author **James Dashner**, facing allegations of sexual miscon-

duct, has been dropped by his literary agent. Michael W. Bourret said in a statement to The Associated Press on Wednesday that "under the circumstances" he could no longer represent Dashner.

■ **Lena Dunham** has written an incredibly personal essay about coming to terms with permanent infertility at age 31. Vogue.com published Dunham's detailed account Wednesday of her decision to undergo a hysterectomy late last year to relieve what she describes as debilitating pain from endometriosis. The award-winning creator of "Girls" and LennyLetter.com also shares her profound desire to experience pregnancy and become a mother and her grief around losing her fertility.

■ Actress **Katharine McPhee** told The Associated Press that she is stepping into the hit musical "Waitress." This is her Broadway debut. She starts April 10 and stars through June 17.



Nick Park, left, director of the stop-motion animated film "Early Man," and the voice of the wild boar character Hognob, cradles the puppet as he noses in front of the film's Royal Box set at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. Below left, a puppet character named Dug — voiced by actor Eddie Redmayne in "Early Man" — is in front of a box of interchangeable mouth expressions. The film opens in the U.S. and some installation theaters Feb. 16.

PHOTOS BY CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Timeless

Wallace and Gromit creator goes prehistoric with 'Early Man'

STARS AND STRIPES

Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Lt. Col. Michael C. Bailey, Europe commander
Lt. Col. Richard McClintic, Pacific commander
Harry Eley, Europe Business Operations

EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor
leonard.terry@stars.com
Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor
reid.robert@stars.com
Tina Croyley, Managing Editor for Content
croyley.tina@stars.com
Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stars.com
Joe Gromelski, Managing Editor for Digital
gromelski.joe@stars.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast

Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
slavin.erik@stars.com
+40(0)631.3615.9350, DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific

Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stars.com
+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380, DSN (315)227.7380

Washington

Joseph Cacioli, Washington Bureau Chief
cacioli.joseph@stars.com
(+1)202(761.0908, DSN (312)763.0908
Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
bowers.brian@stars.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast
Robert Reismann, reismann.robert@stars.com
+40(0)631.3615.9150, DSN (314)583.9150

Europe

Van Rowell, rowell.van@stars.com
+40(0)631.3615.9111, DSN (314)583.9111

Pacific

Mari Mori, customerhelp@stars.com
+81-3 6385.3171, DSN (315)229.3171
or by phone at 202.761.0900

CONTACT US

Washington

tel: (+1)202-761.0900, DSN (312)763.0900;
529 14th Street NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC
20045-1301

Reader letters

letters@stars.com

Additional contacts

stars.com/contacts

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OPINION

Help Puerto Rico by sinking the Jones Act

By NICOLAS LORIS

The Heritage Foundation

Five months have passed since Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, and more than 400,000 Puerto Ricans still lack electricity. Many have no access to food supplies and drinkable water. Yet this U.S. territory doesn't just need recovery; it desperately needs reform. One easy reform for Congress to take is to sink the Jones Act, which would help to nix the Jones Act, which would help to nix the Jones Act, which would help to nix the Jones Act.

Originally conceived to sustain the Merchant Marine fleet after World War I, the Jones Act is nothing more than a protectionist measure that concentrates benefits to a select few at the expense of many, especially noncontiguous U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico.

The Jones Act undermines U.S. economic competitiveness in several ways. According to a number of economic analyses, including ones from the U.S. International Trade Commission and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Jones Act vessels have dramatically less bidding and operating costs than other options available to shippers. U.S.-flagged container ships and tankers spend more than four times as much as foreign vessels.

Anecdotal evidence illustrates the economic inefficiencies created by the Jones Act. NPR's "Planet Money" podcast told

the story of Hawaiian cattle rancher Pono von Holt. To avoid using a pricier Jones Act vessel, von Holt would ship his cattle to Canada and then down to the U.S. for consumption.

When that didn't pan out, von Holt would actually send the cattle by plane, shipping them across the Atlantic and back on weight costs. As NPR's Zoe Chace said, "When cows fly, it's a sign that there are some real distortions in the maritime shipping business."

In 2014, New Jersey couldn't get rock salt from Maine to treat icy roads. Maine had 40,000 tons of it, and a vessel available for transport. "It was a perfect coincidence," Joseph Dee, spokesman for the New Jersey Department of Transportation, remarked at the time. "There was this foreign-flagged vessel next to the salt; it had unloaded its cargo. It was large enough to take it (the salt) to Newark."

The vessel was the Jones Act-compliant. So the salt couldn't be shipped on it. Defenders of the Jones Act blame poor planning, but the reality is the Jones Act makes it more difficult and costly to match supplies of goods with demand.

The Jones Act inflicts serious economic harm on consumers and businesses, particularly in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and Puerto Rico. Economists Scott Swisher and Woan Fong Wong estimate that repealing the Jones Act would save consumers \$1.91 billion that occur from additional shipping costs.

For Puerto Rico, in desperate need of the affordable staples in life, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that "It costs an estimated \$3,063 to ship a twenty-foot container of household and commercial goods from the East Coast of the United States to Puerto Rico; the same shipment costs \$1,504 to nearby Santo Do-

mingo (Dominican Republic) and \$1,687 to Kingston (Jamaica) — destinations that are not subject to Jones Act restrictions."

The exorbitant costs of Jones Act vessels has forced noncontiguous states and territories to look elsewhere for supplies, which means lost opportunities for American products such as corn and soybeans. Accountability Office notes that the Puerto Rican Farm Bureau said the rate difference between Jones Act carriers and foreign carriers has led farmers and ranchers on the island to more often source animal feed and crop fertilizers from foreign sources than from U.S. sources, even though commodity prices were stated to be similar.

They provided an example that shipping feed from New Jersey by Jones Act carriers costs more per ton than shipping from Saint John, Canada, by a foreign carrier — even though Saint John is 500 miles farther away. The GAO highlights that other products such as corn and soybeans could be coming from the U.S. but are now coming from foreign suppliers.

The Jones Act also undermines the long-term competitiveness of the U.S. shipping industry. Government support for the industry artificially props up the market, reducing the incentives for American companies to become cost-competitive and encouraging dependence on the preferential treatment by the government.

Furthermore, when the government uses its power to protect the American shipbuilders, they use more of their resources to lobby for continued protection. The result is a tight web of politicians and special interests making decisions that benefit very few while dispersing the costs among the rest of us.

Nicolas Loris is The Heritage Foundation's Herbert and Joyce Morgan Fellow, specializing in energy, environmental and regulatory policy analysis.

Generally speaking, Trump needs to replace Kelly

By MARTIN SCHRAM

Tribune News Service

Undoubtedly, the Trump White House must have set modern records for its repeated promises of presidential transparency.

Unfortunately, what Team Trump has delivered so far can only be called transparency.

We have been watching the Trump presidency in action as a diffused reality, witnessed through a lens that is merely a frosted window. We see movement and hear explanations, but sometimes it all looks shadowy, and occasionally the action looks downright shady. All we know for sure is that Team Trump's actions rarely seem to match its words.

Right now, we have been staring through our translucent lens at the sad and frankly shocking mal-performance of President Donald Trump's second White House chief of staff, the highly admired retired four-star Marine Gen. John Kelly.

Rarely have I been as wrong about a top government official as I was when Trump brought in Kelly, his secretary of homeland security, to replace his original chief of staff, the ineffectual Reince Priebus. Kelly had won powerful accolades from former Defense Secretaries Leon Panetta and Robert Gates, having served as their military aide. Panetta, an old friend, and Gates, whom I also once praised, Kelly was a no-nonsense guy who would bring order to the White House.

I hoped and believed Kelly would be a desperately needed good influence on our president, who very much wanted to surround himself with generals who would bring a layer of respect to his presidency. I hoped Kelly would bring at least some

self-discipline and common sense to our Times-edited press at a time when U.S. intelligence agency heads agree our democracy continues to be under attack by the Russians. I also thought Kelly, whom I believed valued honesty, would bring a level of veracity to a presidency that had become infamous for often being loose with the truth and other times flat-out lying to Americans. (Trump's own One America news outlet recorded inaugural crowd size comes to mind.)

It turned out that in some ways, Kelly is actually much like Trump — especially when it comes to inflexible, hardline politics that has at its core a very perceptible hate-based reflex that can erupt publicly at the impulsive moments, in the most imprudent ways.

Last October, Kelly came out to brief White House reporters — but what was intended to be a demonstration of expertise and control erupted into a tirade and outright lie about a liberal black member of Congress. (Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Haw.) Kelly falsely claimed that at a dedication of an FBI building in South Florida she had "talked about how she was instrumental in getting the funding" for the building. But video of that dedication showed she had actually told a heartwarming story: how the FBI had asked that the building be named for two FBI agents slain in the line of duty.

And so the liberal Democratic congresswoman said she had called then-Republican House Speaker John Boehner and Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio and together that bipartisan team got the job done. Shockingly, even when confronted with the video reality, the four-star Marine general (who I had assumed was a pillar of honesty) has refused to apologize to the

black liberal to this day.

This month, Kelly crudely disparaged undocumented immigrants who are categorized as "Dreamers" (brought to the U.S. illegally as children, grew up here, lived honorably and paid taxes in the only homeland they'd ever known). Kelly blurted that "Dreamers" (predominantly Latino) who never registered may have been "too lazy to get off their asses." Shameful. Perhaps they lacked the required \$460 application fee — and many feared they'd be deported after applying.

Most stunningly, Kelly has been criticized for permitting staff secretary Rob Porter to remain on the job even though the FBI informed the White House months ago that he'd been investigated for abusing his first and second wives and a girlfriend. Also, Porter wasn't approved for his full security clearance but had been allowed to deliver highly classified documents to the president. And Kelly ordered his staff and press office to issue timelines that were later contradicted by the FBI. That has led many White House staff members to complain to reporters that they considered Kelly untruthful.

We all remember Reality TV star Trump's signature shout at the end of each " Apprentice" episode. So we can all imagine what 2016 Candidate Trump would have shouted at rallies if President Barack Obama or Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had permitted a chief of staff to so disregard spousal abuse and security clearance matters. And he'd be right.

"You're fired."

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Be proactive on pandemics

The Washington Post

Pick any of the serious infectious disease outbreaks of recent years, and the chances are it started in one country and spread to others. The swine flu pandemic began in Mexico and soon swept into the United States; severe acute respiratory syndrome began in southern China and soon was in dozens of countries; the 2014-15 Ebola virus disease outbreak that killed 11,314 people began in Guinea and spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone and threatened many others. The basic facts that pathogens don't stop at passport control and move fast in today's globalized world are why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been active in so many places abroad since the Ebola catastrophe.

At the time of the Ebola crisis, Congress approved a one-time, five-year emergency supplemental spending package, of which \$600 million was sent to the CDC to help countries prevent infectious disease threats from turning into epidemics. Anticipating that that money will run out in October 2019, the CDC has begun notifying country directors to begin planning withdrawal from 39 of 49 countries. This is not a pullout of all CDC programs — activity abroad will go on in such areas as fighting polio, malaria, HIV and tuberculosis — but it does mean retreating from front-line outposts for preventing, detecting and responding to outbreaks. According to The Post's Lena H. Sun, the CDC plans to pull out of China, Pakistan, Haiti, Rwanda and Congo, among others, but would remain engaged in 10 nations.

A retreat will be counterproductive. The money is a small fraction of what pandemics can cost later on. The CDC programs on front-line work in outbreak detection and work to strengthen laboratory and emergency response systems. A coalition of groups supporting the program reminded the Trump administration recently that the Ebola outbreak alone cost U.S. taxpayers \$5.4 billion in an emergency supplemental appropriation. The CDC program is a good example of a relatively small investment that can pay big dividends and is part of a global health security initiative launched during the Obama years.

Congress should not let the CDC effort lapse. We're not sanguine about the fiscal situation, with big tax cuts now in place and a new budget deal just signed that seems to be opening up the spending spigots. However, if the resources are available, this program merits a claim on them. The new pandemic will come along sooner or later. The United States should not wait for the winds and waters to carry it here; far better to be prepared and vigilant abroad, and to fully underwrite the CDC's ability to do so.

Is fiscal responsibility passé?

The Orange County (Calif.) Register

With the budget deal signed last week, the White House and Congress have abandoned even the pretense of fiscal responsibility.

The bipartisan budget deal passed on Feb. 9 suspended the debt ceiling through March 1, 2019, increased spending by \$300 billion and raised spending caps first put in place in 2011 at the peak of the tea party movement.

It keeps the federal government on track to hit \$1 trillion annual deficits.



For that kind of outcome to occur under the watch of a Republican-controlled White House, Senate and the House of Representatives should disabuse anyone of the notion that overspending is an exclusively Democratic problem and that Republicans can be depended upon for fiscal discipline.

It's a complete reversal from the tough talk of Republicans during the Obama administration, something Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., pointed out in a Sunday appearance on CBS's "Face the Nation."

Elected in 2010 as part of the tea party tidal wave that gave Republicans control of the House, Paul recalled the widespread condemnations of \$11 trillion deficits during President Barack Obama. "I'm still against deficit spending; just because Republicans are doing it doesn't make it any better," he said.

Unfortunately, President Donald Trump's new budget plan only takes the discussion even further in the wrong direction. The 2019 spending plan from the White House calls for \$4.4 trillion in spending against \$3.4 trillion in revenue, which thereby leaves the \$1 trillion deficit. The White House plan also projects a near-\$1 trillion deficit in 2020 followed by a decade of continued deficit spending, ending in 2028 with deficit of \$363 billion.

This is not a responsible path forward. Saddling current and future generations with massive debts because of a desire for a bloated federal government with lower taxes than necessary to finance that desire is not a responsible way of governing.

As beneficial as tax cuts signed in December might be, they will ultimately aggravate the gap between spending and revenues. For principled fiscal conservatives, the idea should be to reduce spending accordingly. That is easier said than done, of course, but members of Congress are ostensibly there to do the hard work of solving difficult problems.

For now, it seems, Republican leaders are split on how to effectively tackle the deficit.

House Speaker Paul Ryan has talked about the need for entitlement reform as part of any true attempt to balance the federal budget, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said in December that entitlement reform wouldn't be on the agenda this year, and Trump has shown little interest in it.

Where they seem to agree, though, is on higher military spending. At some point, fiscal conservatives must be open to the possibility that throwing more money at the military might not be consistent with their vision for limited government or fiscal responsibility. As Paul encouraged fellow Republicans to think about, "Is the military budget too small or maybe is our mission too large around the world?"

While they're trying to have it both ways, Republicans must choose between com-

mitments to fiscal responsibility or whatever compels them to drive up \$1 trillion deficits once in power.

MLB parks need more netting

Chicago Tribune

It happens in the blink of an eye: A pitch arrives at the plate, the batter swings and a baseball or a bat rockets into the stands. In most cases, there is no harm beyond a few spilled nachos. But sometimes a fan fails to get out of the way, with grim consequences.

Last fall, a toddler sitting with her grandparents at Yankee Stadium was struck in the face by a 105-mph foul that broke her nose and orbital bones and caused bleeding in her brain. A Schaumburg, Ill., man sued the Chicago Cubs last year after an errant drive left him with facial fractures and unable to see out of one eye. In 2010, a 39-year-old mother of two attending a minor league game in Texas suffered a fatal injury from a drive that hit her head.

These are not as rare as you might think. A Bloomberg News investigation found that some 1,750 fans are injured each year at major league games.

Major League Baseball has been quick to adopt technological changes to keep fans entertained, even though it means some of them spend more time looking at their smartphones than at the field. It has been slower to address the dangers of such distraction for those sitting close to the plate but beyond the protective netting behind it.

In 2015, it recommended that teams extend the nets to the inside edge of each dugout. Most teams, to their credit, went even further, installing protection to the far end of each dugout. Both the Cubs and White Sox have committed to follow suit.

Last month, with spring training fast approaching, the last two holdouts, the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Tampa Bay Rays, said they would do the same before opening day. Commissioner Rob Manfred had been expected to mandate such changes.

He and the teams are wise to look for ways to make the game safer for spectators. Some fans don't like to watch behind nets, but most quickly forget their presence — and none wants to suffer or see a serious injury during what is supposed to be an enjoyable diversion.

But the change was not entirely altruistic. A New York City councilman had proposed an ordinance requiring the Yankees and Mets to string netting all the way to the foul poles — which is the norm in Japan. Some injuries have led to lawsuits, and delaying improvements amounted to inviting more legal troubles.

The professional sport has long enjoyed the shield of the "Baseball Rule," which is printed on tickets to warn that spectators attend at their own risk. But that protec-

tion, though recognized by the courts, has been called into question by the nature of modern ballparks.

"People can now interact using their cellphones while sitting in their seats," Chicago attorney Timothy Liam Epstein told The Seattle Times. "And so, you now have venue owners and teams that are participating actively in individual, targeted distractions that would seem to be a relatively easy way for a plaintiff's attorney to defeat a presumption of the case getting tossed under the 'Baseball Rule.'" Last year, the Atlanta Braves reached a settlement with the father of a 6-year-old girl who suffered a fractured skull from a foul ball.

Team owners would rather not write that kind of check. Fans would rather not incur that kind of injury. With expanded netting in place, both will be a lot safer.

Due process for victims too

The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer

The American principle of due process should be used neither as a political football nor a reason to excuse credibly accused abusers who are unlikely to face criminal or civil proceedings. Doing so undermines faith in the criminal justice system and makes it more difficult for victims to receive justice and for the innocent to clear their names.

And, yet, that's precisely what the Trump administration has been doing, beginning with the president himself.

"Peoples (sic) lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation," Donald Trump tweeted Saturday. "Some are true and some are false. Some are old and some are new. There is no recovery for some family members' life and career are gone. Is there no such thing any longer as Due Process?"

The president seemed to be responding to reports about how his administration egregiously handled allegations of domestic abuse by a top White House aide, though some believe it was in defense of a Republican congressman, Steve Wynn. Bob Porter, the White House aide, has been accused by two ex-wives of serial domestic abuse. Porter denied the charges, but the evidence included a photo of one of his ex-wives with a blackened eye. The FBI interviewed the women months ago and were told of the allegations, and many inside the White House also knew. Still, they denied anything was wrong and argued in favor of Porter — until the photo made that impossible.

Due process is a critically important standard. It most often refers to defendants having fair trials and representation in a court of law. That's a legal standard that must always be protected. We should expect the same adherence to the presumption of innocence in the court of public opinion. Baseless accusations should not be allowed to ruin people's lives.

Due process is a bridge, not a barrier, to justice for the accused and the victim. It means both sides get heard. A lack of due process has forced countless women to endure rather than expose abuse they've experienced in their homes. The principle of due process must apply even outside of the courtroom, which means a full, fair hearing wherever disputes erupt. There would be no crisis of sexual abuse and harassment had supervisors throughout the country guaranteed victims fair treatment in their workplaces.

North Carolina knows well what can happen to the falsely accused when due process is short-circuited. Just ask the 2006 Duke lacrosse team.

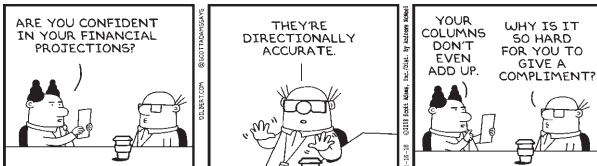
Porter's ex-wives, who said they suffered repeated abuse from the now former White House aide, were denied due process. They endured in silence for years.

They are now being heard. No one, not even the president of the United States, should be allowed to make them silent again.

Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



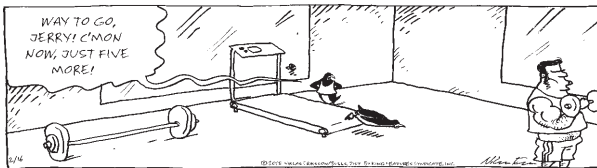
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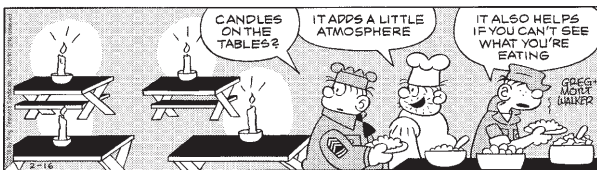
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Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12						13		14		
15						16		17		
		18				19		20		
21	22		23				24			
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29			30		31			32	33	34
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44				45				46		
47				48			49		50	51
52				53			54			
55				56			57			

ACROSS

- 1 Liniment targets
- 6 Small ammo
- 9 Sixth sense
- 12 Flinch, say
- 13 Hosp. sections
- 14 Tax prep pro
- 15 — firma
- 16 16th president
- 18 Pinhead
- 20 Landed
- 21 Lanka lead-in
- 23 Boxer
- 24 Tizzies
- 25 Hunger symptom
- 27 Examined, pre-burglary
- 29 Long-haired cat
- 31 USC athlete
- 35 Deli pancake
- 37 Hindu royal
- 38 Winter woes
- 41 Away from WSW
- 43 "Friends" cast member
- 44 Mayberry boy
- 45 Parka
- 47 35th president
- 49 Ruhr Valley city
- 52 Before
- 53 Spanish aunt
- 54 Fall under pressure

DOWN

- 55 — Diego
- 56 Raggedy doll
- 57 Doctrine
- 22 Scooted
- 24 Sun. talk
- 26 50th anniversary
- 28 Shorthand pro
- 30 Univ. dorm supervisors
- 32 7th president
- 33 Yucatan year
- 34 Prohibit
- 36 Nairobi native
- 38 Popular colas
- 39 Puccini work
- 40 Sheets and such
- 42 Upright
- 45 Tennis score
- 46 Tennis legend
- Arthur
- 48 JFK info
- 50 Scrape (out)
- 51 Bottom line

Answer to Previous Puzzle

SLUR	AID	IDES
NATO	POE	NITE
UZIS	RUB	CLAM
GELATI	T	TAHITI
	ROC	LEG
GREY	OCCIDENT	
EON	TAU	NEA
ENTRUSTS	STOP	
	ION	TIC
SORDID	ADAPTS	
CREE	APR	RUSE
OSLO	LED	CRAW
TOYS	INS	ERRS

2-16

CRYPTOQUIP

NFTH DJM RMU MG WJKT

KJHTD CHUJ ITAD UFCH,

HLLAJN GCTRTW, NFLU KCFYU

DJM SJ? WPCITA SJPLAW.

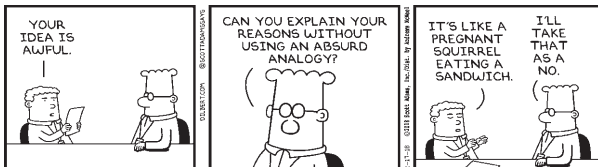
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHY DO MY FOLKS WANT TO MAKE ME FEEL GUILTY DAY IN AND DAY OUT? IT'S ALWAYS THE SHAME THING!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals M

Frazz



Dilbert



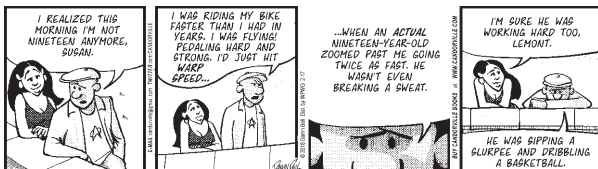
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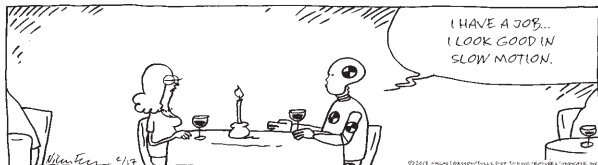
Non Sequitur



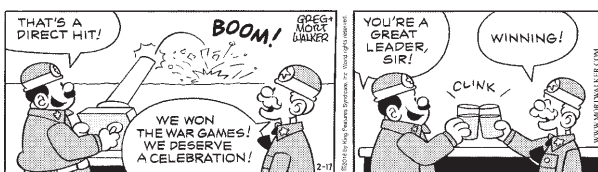
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Carpe Diem



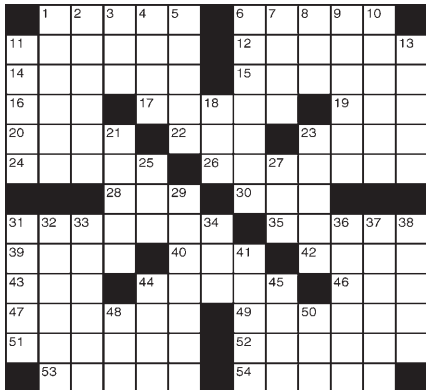
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Fighting
- 6 Earthquake
- 11 Fly a plane
- 12 Assault
- 14 Waiter in a French bistro
- 15 Subtlety
- 16 In the manner of 17 — Gras
- 19 Calendar box
- 20 Lincoln in-law
- 22 Felon's flight
- 23 Party cheese
- 24 January, to Juan
- 26 Floral wreath
- 28 "Simpsons" storekeeper
- 30 Ultramodernist
- 31 Wearable
- 35 Wanderer
- 39 Director Kazan
- 40 Tree fluid
- 42 Lucy's partner
- 43 Dawn goddess
- 44 Old photo tint
- 46 Mimic
- 47 Pop singer Easton
- 49 January gemstone
- 51 Dine at a restaurant

DOWN

- 52 Salad base
- 53 iTunes downloads
- 54 Decade parts
- 21 Pulitzer category
- 23 Vital fluid
- 25 Unlock, in verse
- 27 Stimp's pal
- 29 Ousts
- 31 Gaggles members
- 32 Island greetings
- 33 Meet, as a challenge
- 34 Spigot
- 36 Not as nice
- 37 Trembling trees
- 38 Losing ventures?
- 41 Tot's toe
- 44 Tight-fitting
- 45 Bern's river
- 48 Very long time
- 50 Irish actor Stephen

Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-17

CRYPTOQUIP

L P K R S C F I K I J K E S

M Z E I I K I J L C M E U C A A E Z Z

S U X F B N K L X E F N R. K L ' Z Z

G B E N B G L - N B A U K I J E X L.

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Announcements 040

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Automotive 140

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HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA EUROPE

Class evaluation

Breaking down European championship title contenders in wrestling by weight

BY GREGORY BROOME

Stars and Stripes

Grapplers from across Europe gather at Wiesbaden's Clay Kaserne Fitness Center on Friday and Saturday for the 2017-18 DODEA Europe wrestling championships, a packed two-day event with 14 individual championships and three divisional team titles at stake.

The Stuttgart Panthers have dominated the event in recent years and won their fourth consecutive Division I team title this time a year ago. The Panthers are likely to again crown multiple weight-class champions on Saturday. But they'll be challenged for the team title by the Ramstein Royals, who will flood the brackets with Europe's deepest roster and might stockpile enough points to unseat Europe's reigning dynasty.

Aviano Saints are near-locks to repeat as Division II champions, boasting depth and top-flight title contenders no school their size can rival. But the Division III team race is wide open among a handful of small-school hopefuls.

106 pounds: There's a vacancy at the top of DODEA Europe's smallest division as neither of last year's finalists return.

Ramstein has a pair of entries in central sectional champion Andres Hart and Matthew Oreskovich, while rival Kaiserslautern offers a counter in northern sectional champion Jasson Quinones.

But reigning champions Stuttgart and Aviano will try to register some early points in this spot. McKinley Fielding is a legitimate title contender for the Panthers, as is southern sectional winner Ethan Herrera of the Saints.

113: Last year's 113-pound third-place match between Wiesbaden's Atreyu Allen and Sigonella's Munro Manning might have served as a preview of this year's final in the weight class.

With 2017's top two finishers out of the way, Allen and Manning are poised to move into the main event. Each had first-place finishes in the central and southern qualifiers.

Northern sectional champ Noah Wolfe of Kaiserslautern will try to intervene, as will Vilseck's Johnathan Alvarado, Ramstein's Eli Rothas, Stuttgart's Jack Engelage and Brussels' Caleb Burnett.

120: Kaiserslautern's sophomore Conner Mackie, who narrowly lost

last winter's 113-pound title bout, will take another title shot after a standout regular season and first-place northern sectional finish.

The bracket includes seasoned Vilseck senior Adrian Cruz and sophomore upstart Philip Rivera of Rota, as well as solid entries from the Division I powerhouse in Stuttgart's Carter Hanes and Ramstein's Brian McKinley.

126: Stuttgart will seek to claim key team points here on the strength of Sean Smith, who moved to the head of the weight class in a season capped by a first-place central sectional showing.

Aviano has its own strong entry in fresh contender Julius Gdang. But the upstart will have to overcome a lot to reach the finals, including southern sectional champion Ben Latimer of Sigonella and the imposing duos of Ramstein's Xavier Woodard and Christian Griffith, Lakenheath's Jacob Brown and Philip Severance and Vilseck's Nicholas Burns and Brian Stachel.

132: Stuttgart's Benjamin Fielding is the presumed champion in this 11-wrestler bracket despite its considerable depth and quality. Fielding is seemingly unbeatable on a DODEA Europe mat, having won a title at 120 pounds as a freshman, at 126 pounds as a sophomore and blasting through yet another new weight class this winter.

He's likely to again encounter Aviano's Liam Knowles, the northern sectional champion, in Saturday's final. Fielding pinned Knowles in 46 seconds in last year's 126-pound title bout.

Ramstein's Dante Lاپتان and Lakenheath's Ethan Boren are among potential spoilers.

138: Aviano's Jacob Gamboa jumped up multiple weight classes since reaching the championship match at 120 pounds a year ago. The sophomore cruised through the southern sectional and is a strong bet to meet or exceed last year's second-place showing.

Ramstein's Russell Bodily is among Gamboa's top threats. Zavier Benoit of Alconbury won the northern sectional and will look to collect some viable team points for the Division III Dragons.

145: The rivalry between Stuttgart's Abraham Engelage and Ramstein's Joseph Medina continued in the central sectional, with Engelage claiming first. The matchup could be a major factor



KENT HARRIS/Stars and Stripes

Aviano's Jacob Gamboa continued an unbeaten season by defeating Vicenza's Anthony Verduga at 138 pounds at the southern sectional.

in determining the outcome of the larger Panther-Royal struggle.

Southern sectional champion Anthony Corvantes of Aviano and northern counterpart Brenden Yates of Lakenheath might disrupt such a rematch.

152: Wiesbaden's Joshua Theodore fell short in the finals of this weight class last year and is poised to return. The Warrior senior took first in the central sectional and enters the tournament as the grappler to beat.

Jackson Blivin will attempt to do exactly that. The Naples captain has dominated the south and will look to extend that to Wiesbaden. He placed third in Europe at 145 pounds last winter.

This particularly difficult 12-wrestler class includes one more championship-level entry in SHAPE's Zak Kappelman, who has dominated the north. Kappelman reached the semifinals at 152 pounds last winter.

160: Munich International's squad consists of two wrestlers. But what a pair they are.

Blaise Ronnau will bring a perfect 22-0 record, including three impressive pinfall wins in the northern sectional, making him a favorite to claim gold.

Northern sectional champion Bohdan Polovynko, central sectional winner Gregory Sanchez of Stuttgart and Ramstein's Aaron Valentine are among Ronnau's most formidable obstacles.

170: Munich's small but impactful presence continues with Blaise's brother Drake Ronnau. The elder Ronnau is similarly undefeated and the southern sectional champion, and he's also coming off a third-place showing at 160 pounds in 2017.

Championship-bout appearances and/or wins for the Ronnau brothers might be enough to deliver Munich a Division III title.

Sectional champions Robert Baumbach of Stuttgart and Daniel Holland of Lakenheath comprise Drake Ronnau's stiffest competition.

182: Vicenza has a relatively small contingent this year, but the Cougars have a good chance in this class. Ethan Johnston, a semifinalist at 170 pounds last year, won the southern sectional.

While Vicenza won't have the numbers for a Division I championship bid, other entries in this bracket will be looking to help their teams' title efforts, including central sectional champ Ayden Kemp of Ramstein and Stuttgart rival Connor Boyer.

Division III Alconbury will seek to keep pace with Munich via a strong showing by northern sectional winner Dee Wilson.

195: Kaiserslautern senior Hunter Wiles is a seasoned competitor in the upper weight classes, having finished fifth at 182 pounds a year ago. He'll stack up against central champion William Green of Stuttgart, southern champion Augusto de Sousa Matos and Nick Clarida of Naples and Ramstein grapplers Sean Elliott and Teddy Ward in this eight-man bracket.

220: Kaiserslautern's Royce Stazio edged Vilseck's Juan Oestreich by a 2-1 decision in a semifinal match that was among the best at last year's championship meet. The two are likely to bring that evenly matched action to the main stage this weekend.

The seniors have been the best of the weight class all winter and confirmed as much in the sectional round. Central sectional champ Milo Clark of Ramstein will seek to scuttle the anticipated rematch.

285: Central sectional champion John Carroll and runner-up Christopher Frye represent the Panthers; Caleb Love and CJ Jackson represent the Royals. Northern sectional champion Marshall Ellis of Brussels and southern champion Joe Perroni of Sigonella offer some small-school resistance to balance the scales.

broome.gregory@stripes.com
Twitter: @broomestripes

Weekend peek Teams use weekend to tune up

BY GREGORY BROOME

Stars and Stripes

At next week's DODEA Europe basketball championship tournament, every team on the continent will lock in on its divisional competition in search of a coveted Division I, II or III title.

This weekend, the peak of the regular season, will see a lot of those teams prepare for that grind with tough non-divisional matchups.

The marquee event is a Friday-Saturday doubleheader between host Black Forest Academy, the defending Division II champion in both boys and girls, and visiting Ramstein, the reigning champion in Division I boys and returning runner-up in Division I girls. All four teams remain squarely in their respective title pictures and could earn a psychological boost from a successful final weekend.

The Ramstein boys have rounded into championship form of late after a rocky start. The Royals have gone undefeated in the new year after posting a 2-2 pre-holiday record and are coming off a 61-52 defeat of Wiesbaden in a rematch of last year's championship.

Black Forest is also peaking at the right time and has the goods to slow Ramstein's momentum. The Falcons are quite comfortable punching above their weight, as last weekend's 82-52 and 70-57 wins over Division I Vilseck demonstrated.

The girls' matchup figures to be equally intriguing. Ramstein is wedged into a logjam of accomplished contenders trailing unbeaten Naples in Division I. While it won't help the Royals' divisional stature, a sweep of the Falcons would help ease the sting of recent losses to Division I rivals Vilseck and Kaiserslautern.

Further north, two cross-divisional matchups should reveal a lot about lower-division hopefuls.

The Afnorth girls sit atop Division II with a 4-0 divisional record and an 11-3 overall record. The Lions can address one of those three losses Friday when they host Brussels, who edged Afnorth 24-22 on Dec. 1. The Brigands plan to present a serious challenge to first-place Hohenfels and defending champion Sigonella in their Division II tournament.

The Baumbacher boys are the only undefeated boys team in DODEA Europe and will enter the Division III bracket with a solid chance to unseat reigning Sigonella. But the Bucs' perfect record is at risk against Division II frontrunner H. Spaanablen, which is looking to get back on track after last weekend's tough trip to Lakenheath.

In the south, the weekend's home-and-home set between Division I Vicenza and Division II Aviano puts regional bragging rights at stake.

broome.gregory@stripes.com
Twitter: @broomestripes

Game of the week

Basketball: Kaiserslautern vs. Wiesbaden on Friday

Wiesbaden's 61-55 defeat of Kaiserslautern on Dec. 12 was a worthy foil to the 2017 portion of the DODEA Europe boys basketball season. Their rematch Friday should be an equally deserving centerpiece to the final weekend of the regular season.

Both the Warriors and Raiders have the potential to reach and win the Feb. 24 Division I European

championship game. But both teams have suffered losses to resurgent reigning champion Ramstein in recent weeks.

Friday's game will offer needed catharsis for the team that, like it, not to mention a potentially enhanced seed in the Division I tournament bracket.

The Kaiserslautern girls, meanwhile, are at a late-

season crossroads. A win over Wiesbaden would land the Raiders at 7-5 to finish the divisional season and potentially slot the team on the second tier of Division I contenders behind reigning Naples. A loss to the Warriors would drop the Raiders to 5-6 in the division and drop them into the middling depths of the division.

COLLEGE BASEBALL PREVIEW

10 players to watch

■ **RHP Brady Singer, Florida:** Singer enters the season projected to be the No. 1 overall pick by the Detroit Tigers in the Major League Baseball draft in June. The 6-foot-5, 210-pound junior made 19 starts, pitched 126 innings and went 9-5 in 2017. He made two starts in the College World Series, winning both and striking out 21 in 14 innings. He set a CWS finals record with 12 strikeouts against LSU in Game 1. Singer and fellow Gator Jackson Kowar, also expected to be a first-round pick, are joined by Tyler Dyson in one of the nation's most formidable weekend rotations.

■ **LHP Shane Bieber, South Florida:** McCannahan is rated as the No. 1 or 2 draft-eligible left-hander in the college game. The 6-2, 188-pounder came back from Tommy John surgery to strike out 12.32 per nine innings last season, ranking eighth in the country. He also led the American Athletic Conference with a .181 batting average against. With a 97-mph fastball and effective changeup, McCannahan draws comparisons to Chris Sale and is on track to be the highest draft pick in USF history.

■ **INF Nick Madrigal, Oregon State:** At 5-8 and 165 pounds, the junior is out of the mold of 2017 American League MVP Jose Altuve. Madrigal was player of the year and defensive player of the year in the Pac-12 last season. He batted .380 with 20 doubles, two triples, four home runs and 40 RBIs. He also stole 16 bases in 18 attempts. He split time between second base and shortstop last season and committed just five errors in 233 chances.

■ **OF/RHP Matt Wallner, Southern Mississippi:** The Golden Eagles' sophomore star could be the best two-way player in the nation now that Brendan McKay has moved on. The 6-5, 220-pound Wallner batted .336 with 19 homers and 63 RBIs last season. He had a .655 slugging percentage and, after taking 45 walks, a .463 on-base percentage. A hip injury limited him to nine pitching appearances; he was 2-0 with three saves and a 1.84 ERA.

■ **SS Jeremy Eierman, Missouri State:** Eierman is coming off one of the greatest offensive seasons in Missouri Valley Conference history. The free-swimming junior was fifth in the nation with 23 homers, led the Valley with 68 RBIs, scored 37 runs and had 39 extra-base hits. He also batted a team-high .341, with runners on base, dove in 26 runs with two outs and reached base in 33 straight games.

■ **OF/1B Seth Beer, Clemson:** Beer won the Dick Howser Trophy as college baseball's top player in 2016 and was a semifinalist last year. Remarkably consistent, he hit 125 career games, with 34 homers, 300 doubles, 123 RBIs and 126 walks. He reached base via a hit or walk in 66 straight games with a plate appearance. Last season he batted .298 with 16 homers, 17 doubles and 53 RBIs and was second in the ACC with 64 walks.

■ **1B Luke Baker, TCU:** The 6-4, 265-pound Baker figures to play a prominent role as the Horned Frogs try to reach a fifth straight CWS. After a season-ending injury May 12, he had a .317 batting average, eight home runs and eight doubles, and 20 of his 41 RBIs came with two outs. He was a two-way player as a freshman but gave up pitching after straining his ankle.

■ **RHP Casey Mize, Auburn:** Mize has blossomed as a first-round prospect after going undrafted in high school. Last season he went 8-2 with a 2.04 ERA and 102 strikeouts despite missing three starts because of an arm issue. His strikeout total was the highest by an Auburn pitcher since 1999. Mize led the nation with a 12.11 strikeout-to-walk ratio and struck out 13 batters per nine innings.

■ **OF Garrett Mitchell, UCLA:** Rated as one of the top freshmen in the country, he raised eyebrows in the wooden-bat West Coast League last summer when he batted .462 with nine home runs, a triple and three doubles in just 13 at-bats. He chose to go to college after slipping to the 14th round in the 2017 draft. He figures to start in right field and, with his upside, projects to be the centerpiece in the Bruins' lineup before the season begins.

■ **OF Griffin Conine, Duke:** The son of retired major league leaguer Jeff Conine was his team's MVP in the Cape Cod League All-Star Game last summer after leading the Blue Devils in every major offensive category last season. His 13 home runs were most by a Duke player since 2010, and his 56 RBIs were the most since 2009.

Associated Press



NATHAN HARRIS/AP

TCU starter Jared Janczak helps comprise one of the top pitching staffs in the country. The Horned Frogs are a consensus top-10 team nationally but are picked to finish behind two-time defending conference champion Texas Tech in the Big 12.

Going for five in a row

TCU looks to make fifth straight appearance in CWS

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb.

TCU is looking for some history. A deep pitching staff could lead the way for the Horned Frogs.

TCU heads into the 2018 baseball season looking to join Stanford as the only programs to make five straight College World Series appearances since the NCAA went to its current tournament format in 1999.

The Horned Frogs have the makings for one of the top pitching staffs in the nation, led by starters Jared Janczak, Nick Lodolo and Sean Wyrmer and closer Durbin Feltman.

The biggest question mark is their everyday lineup. Five newcomers probably will start, joining first baseman Luke Baker, right fielder Connor Wanhainen and left fielder Josh Watson.

"We talk a lot, especially this year, about resetting to zero because last year's group was awesome and the year before that was awesome and the year before that as well," Wanhainen said. "This is a completely different team."

TCU is a consensus top-10 team nationally and picked to finish behind two-time defending champion Texas Tech in the Big 12. DI Baseball.com selected shortstop Adam Oviedo for its preseason freshman of the year and Baker as its player of the year in the Big 12.

Baker missed the last 21 games of last season after injuring his left (non-throwing) arm in a collision at first base. He was the 2016 freshman of the year and is batting .355 with 103 RBIs in 114 career games.

"Everything is all healed up 100 percent," Baker said.

Seven programs have reached the CWS

at least five years in row. Miami has done it twice, and Oklahoma State made a record seven consecutive appearances from 1981-87.

TCU is going for its sixth trip to Omaha since 2010. The Frogs have yet to win a national title. Their last two CWS appearances ended with bracket-final losses to eventual champions Coastal Carolina (2016) and Florida (2017).

Ten other teams to watch:

■ **Florida:** The defending national champion Gators are No. 1 in every major preseason poll. Five everyday starters are back, and the pitching rotation is headed by projected first-round picks Brady Singer and Jackson Kowar. The lineup gets a boost from the return of senior catcher JJ Schwarz (12 HR, 56 RBIs), who returned to school after falling to the 38th round of last year's draft.

■ **Oregon State:** The Beavers were beaten just four times before the CWS and then lost back-to-back games to LSU to fall short of a spot in the finals. Pac-12 player of the year Nick Madrigal leads a veteran lineup for the conference favorite. Luke Heimlich heads the pitching staff. He missed the super regional and CWS after the Oregonian newspaper reported he had pleaded guilty to a single count of molesting a 6-year-old girl when he was a teenager.

■ **Florida State:** It's another season that begs the question whether this will be the year Mike Martin, who has led the Seminoles to the CWS 16 times, wins his first national title. Drew Mendoza leads what could be one of the nation's most powerful lineups, and All-American lefty Tyler Holton is back after striking out 144 in 119 1/3 innings last season.

■ **Texas Tech:** The Red Raiders made it to the CWS in 2016 but were upset by Sam Houston State in regionals last year. They

lost some big bats, but they have enough back to win the Big 12. They have one of the nation's best lefties in 10-game winner Steven Gingers and a solid No. 2 starter in Davis Martin.

■ **North Carolina:** Like Texas Tech, the Tar Heels got knocked out of regionals by an upstart (Davidson). Three of the top four hitters are gone, so there are question marks about the offense. The pitching staff is young and talented, headed by 6-foot-6, 256-pound Gianluca Dalatri.

■ **Arkansas:** The Razorbacks are picked to win the SEC West. Grant Koch hit a career-high 13 home runs last season, most by an SEC catcher, and No. 1 starter Blaine Knight is back after striking out 96 in 90 innings. The Hogs also should get a boost from pitcher Isaiah Campbell's return from an elbow injury.

■ **UCLA:** The Bruins usually aren't an offensive juggernaut, but a young everyday lineup matured last season and their production should increase. Jon Olsen is back after going 7-1 as the staff ace.

■ **Cal State Fullerton:** The Titans, picked to win the Big West, bring back a .300 hitter in shortstop Sahid Valenzuela as well as No. 1 starter Colton Eastman, who missed 2 1/2 months in the middle of last season because of an elbow injury, and closer Brett Conine (15 saves).

■ **Indiana:** Coach Chris Lemonis has taken the Hoosiers to regionals in two of his first three seasons, and they are the pick to win the Big Ten. Three returning players hit double-digit homers and the pitching staff is deep and experienced.

■ **South Alabama:** Travis Swaggerty (.356, 60 RBIs) is among eight returning starters from one of the top offenses in the country. The Jaguars of the Sun Belt Conference will need to be productive again because their pitching is a concern.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/NBA

Xavier hosting 'Nova in top-five matchup

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

Villanova and Xavier were among the four teams to earn No. 1 seeds in the NCAA's preliminary rankings before Selection Sunday.

One will get knocked off its perch this weekend.

One of the biggest games of the Big East season — maybe of the college basketball season — will be played in Cincinnati on Saturday, when No. 3 Villanova faces No. 4 Xavier.

The Musketeers (23-3, 11-2) have been on a roll since losing consecutive games in early January, winning eight straight. Xavier moved up to No. 4 in the AP poll this week and was picked as the third overall seed and No. 1 in the Midwest Region by the NCAA Division I Basketball Committee in its initial rankings.

Villanova spent five weeks at No. 1 and appeared to be rolling toward the Big East regular-season title. That changed last week, when the Wildcats suffered a surprising loss to unranked St. John's. Villanova bounced back to defeat Butler, but suffered another upset on Wednesday, 76-71, at the hands of Providence.

Villanova (23-3, 10-3) fell to No. 3 in the AP Top 25, but was the No. 2 overall seed behind Virginia and slotted as the top seed in the East Region. The loser of Saturday's game could end up losing their No. 1 slot, but there's still plenty of time before Selection Sunday on March 11.

Duel in the desert: The rivalry between Arizona and Arizona State had been lopsided for roughly three decades before the Sun Devils became one of college basketball's biggest surprises this season.

Even with its rise in stature, Arizona State still didn't measure up to the Wildcats in the first meeting, becoming the last undefeated Division I team to lose.

That was in Tucson. For the rematch on Thursday, the Sun Devils play at home and have some momentum.

"This time, I'm sure they're very confident and they should be, but I thought the last time they were very confident," Ari-

zona coach Sean Miller said. "You can tell Bobby Hurley has done a really job of instilling that confidence in them, that belief in them."

In the first meeting, Arizona took advantage of its size inside and withstood a late charge to win 84-78, the best start in Arizona State history.

The Sun Devils (19-6, 7-6 Pac-12) continued to have trouble with bigger teams before finding some answers the past two weeks. Arizona State has won three straight, including victories over Southern California and UCLA last week.

Arizona (20-6, 10-3) has lost two of its past four games, both to unranked teams, but still leads the Pac-12 by two games.

Red Raiders and Sooners: Texas Tech (21-4, 9-3 Big 12) has steadily worked its way up the AP Top 25 and remained at No. 7 this week. Not surprisingly, it earned the Red Raiders a spot among the top 16 teams in the NCAA's preliminary rankings at third in the East Region.

Oklahoma also was among the top 16, which came as a surprise to some college basketball fans.

The Sooners were the talk of college basketball early in the season, racking up wins while dynamic freshman Trae Young put on a show every time he took the court. Oklahoma has since cooled off as teams have found a way to make life more difficult for Young, leading to three straight losses and six in eight games.

The Sooners (16-8, 5-6 Big 12) dropped to No. 23 in the AP poll, but were the committee's No. 4 seed in the Midwest based upon their early season victories.

The two teams meet Tuesday in Lubbock.

Loaded day: Sunday has four games involving ranked teams and three of those are ranked vs. ranked.

The first two involve a rivalry game, No. 8 Ohio State at No. 22 Michigan, and an up-and-comer against a blue blood, No. 12 Duke at No. 11 Clemson.

Later, No. 19 Wichita State plays at No. 5 Cincinnati in a key AAC game. The Bearcats have yet to lose in conference (12-0) and hold a three-game lead.



STEPHAN SAVOIA/AP

Villanova coach Jay Wright has words with a referee during the Wildcats' 76-71 loss to the Friars on Wednesday in Providence, R.I.



MICHAEL PEREZ/AP

The Philadelphia 76ers' Ben Simmons (25) will play alongside fellow rookie of the year candidate Donovan Mitchell, of the Utah Jazz, on Friday when the NBA's best first- and second-year players compete in Los Angeles to tip off All-Star weekend.

Around the NBA

Simmons, Mitchell among young phenoms to play in Rising Stars

By BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

Ben Simmons thought he should be an All-Star by now.

Yet each time Commissioner Adam Silver needed to tab an injury replacement from the Eastern Conference, he looked in another direction, to Simmons' disappointment.

Simmons expressed disappointment he didn't get the call. Be patient, rookie. Simmons will likely get his chance someday. Maybe a bunch of them.

"He's a young player that has a bright future that is going to have a long and steady All-Star career," Hall of Famer and TNT analyst Reggie Miller said.

Same with Donovan Mitchell and a few other first-year phenoms.

Those two guards head up a deep rookie class and might be neck-and-neck in this year's NBA rookie of the year race in which both are worthy of winning.

"I'm going to throw it out there. I like the whole Grant Hill and Jason Kidd co-rookie of the years," Miller said. "I'll throw that out there now because I think both are well-deserving of it."

Hill and Kidd shared the award in 1995 and might enter the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame together this summer.

Perhaps Simmons and Mitchell will be similarly linked years from now.

They will be together Friday night when the NBA's best first- and second-year players compete in the Rising Stars in Los Angeles on Friday to kick off All-Star weekend.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	41	16	.719 —
Boston	40	19	.678 2
Philadelphia	30	25	.545 10
New York	23	32	.419 19
Brooklyn	19	40	.323 23
Southeast Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Washington	24	24	.500 —
Miami	30	28	.517 3½
Charlotte	24	33	.423 9
Orlando	18	39	.316 15
Atlanta	18	41	.305 16
Central Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Cleveland	34	22	.607 —
Milwaukee	32	24	.571 2
Indiana	33	25	.569 2½
Detroit	28	29	.491 6½
Chicago	20	37	.351 14½

Western Conference

Southwest Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Houston	44	13	.772 —
San Antonio	35	24	.593 10
Phoenix	31	26	.544 13
Memphis	18	38	.321 25½
Dallas	18	40	.310 26½
Northwest Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Minnesota	35	25	.583 —
Oklahoma City	33	29	.533 2½
Portland	32	26	.552 3½
Utah	31	26	.544 4
Golden State	30	28	.517 4
Pacific Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Golden State	44	14	.759 —
L.A. Clippers	30	26	.536 3
L.A. Lakers	23	33	.411 20
Sacramento	18	39	.316 25½
Phoenix	18	41	.305 26½

Wednesday's games

Charlotte 104, Orlando 102
Detroit 104, Atlanta 98
Philadelphia 104, Miami 92
Indiana 108, Brooklyn 103
Washington 118, New York 113
Houston 100, Sacramento 91
L.A. Clippers 129, Boston 119
New Orleans 132, L.A. Lakers 117
Oklahoma City 121, Memphis 114
Toronto 122, Chicago 98
Utah 107, Phoenix 97
Portland 123, Golden State 117

Thursday's games

Denver at Milwaukee
L.A. Lakers at Minnesota
Team World vs. Team USA at Los Angeles, Calif.

Friday's games

Team World vs. Team USA at Los Angeles, Calif.
Saturday's games
Sunday's games
2018 All-Star Game
Team LeBron vs. Team Stephen at Los Angeles, Calif.

All-Star weekend preview

■ **All-Star Game:** For the first time, it won't be East vs. West on Sunday night. It's Team LeBron vs. Team Stephen after captains LeBron James and Stephen Curry drafted teams from the pool of All-Stars, with the league hoping the new format leads to a more competitive game.

■ **Slam Dunk Contest:** The field includes two rookies, one among Star, and one son of slam dunk royalty. Larry Nance Jr.'s father won the NBA's first slam dunk title in 1984. Rookies Donovan Mitchell of Utah and Dennis Smith Jr. of Dallas, and Pacers All-Star Victor Oladipo round out the field.

■ **Three-point Shootout:** Houston's Eric Gordon defends his title against a field that includes All-Stars Klay Thompson, the 2016 champion, Paul George, Kyle Lowry and Bradley Beal. Also competing are Devin Booker of Phoenix, Tobias Harris of the Clippers and Wayne Ellington of Miami.

■ **Skills Challenge:** The dribbling, passing and shooting event will have a new champion after New York's Kristaps Porzingis had to pull out with a torn left ACL. Big men are 2-for-2 since joining what was previously an event for the little guys, with Karl-Anthony Towns winning in 2016. This year's field: Embiid, Detroit's Andre Drummond, Boston's Al Horford, Chicago rookie Lauri Markkanen, Lou Williams of the Los Angeles Clippers, Brooklyn's Spencer Dinwiddie, Sacramento's Buddy Hield and Denver's Jamal Murray.

AUTO RACING

Kurt Busch eyes Daytona repeat

Only four have gone back-to-back in clinching Great American Race

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Kurt Busch is ready for his close-up outside the car. Busch signed with an entertainment agency in the offseason and may soon make the leap from stock cars to the silver screen.

Busch could beef up his IMDb page instead of racing for NASCAR titles.

Always one of sport's more fiery personalities, performing comes naturally to Busch.

"I've been acting for 18 years in the garage area," Busch said.

Busch already had several starring roles in some of NASCAR's top dramas over the course of his career. He's been the bad boy. He's been rebooted as a family man. Through 18 seasons and five teams, Busch's top starring role has always come behind the wheel.

The 39-year-old Busch is racing toward a Daytona 500 championship sequel.

Busch could become just the fourth driver to go back-to-back and win consecutive Daytona 500s. Richard Petty (1973-1974) and Dale Yarborough (1983-1984) both won consecutive Daytona 500s, and no driver has had his name etched on the Harley J. Earl Trophy two straight years since Sterling Marlin (1994-95).

"I feel the pressure. I like it," Busch said at Daytona International Speedway.

Busch was a bit of a surprise

winner last season in the first race for Ford as part of Stewart-Haas Racing's lineup. Busch, who had been suspended by NASCAR for two days before the 2015 Daytona 500 for off-track behavior, used a last-lap pass to win a race that was otherwise marred by a series of wrecks. He survived the crashes and gave SHR its first Daytona 500 victory.

"Winning Daytona is like winning a championship," Busch said. "It's one of the coolest things in stock car racing is to win Daytona. To hoist up a trophy and to have that with us at Stewart-Haas, it's equivalent to winning a championship."

Busch has a trophy, just not the winning No. 41 Ford.

The car has been on display for the last year at Daytona International Speedway's Daytona 500 Experience Museum.

Busch wanted the car — he had a failed negotiation at keeping the Ford in his recent contract talks — but it's headed to the Stewart-Haas Racing shop where it goes on display with Kevin Harvick's 2014 Cup series title winner and team co-owner Tony Stewart's 2010 championship car.

"Hopefully, we'll push one in next week and then I'll have that car the year after," Busch said. Again, Busch will be a longshot.

There have been repeat NASCAR champions and drivers who swept multiple races on the same track in the same season, but none who could solve Day-



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Kurt Busch waits in his car while crew members make adjustments in his garage during a practice session at Daytona International Speedway last week. Busch is the defending Daytona 500 champion.

tona two straight years in the 23 seasons since Marlin went back-to-back at "The Great American Race."

Just what makes the Daytona defense so tricky?

"You can't go back to the same pattern from a year ago," Busch said. "Everything changes so quick. If you think you have mastered the track, you can never do that. This place, you have to respect the track. You have to respect the race itself and have to find new things each and every year."

There was some doubt Busch would even get the chance to repeat with SHR.

Busch, who signed with Stewart's team in 2014, had his contract option declined last year by the team before the two sides in December agreed on a one-year deal for 2018. Crew chief Tony Gibson retired from his position at the end of last season, and

Busch has a new chief in Billy Scott. Scott was crew chief for former SHR driver Danica Patrick the last two seasons.

The Daytona 500 did nothing to serve as a catalyst for Busch's season. He failed to win another race, led only 16 laps all season and quickly flamed out in NASCAR's playoffs.

There's another repeat in doubt: New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski could make another cameo in the pits as both athletes are sponsored by Monster Energy. Gronkowski celebrated with Busch and the Monster girls in victory lane a year ago.

Busch, the 2014 Cup champion with 29 wins in 612 career starts, hadn't heard much about other stars in the pits.

"Every race there's somebody cool, somebody different," Busch said.

Busch found his own cool fac-

tor in front of the camera, filming spots for Discovery's "Fast N' Loud" and he worked as a guest commentator at a Supercross event. He'd like to work more behind the mic.

"It's fun to learn more about the TV side of things," he said. "If I'm able to do anything in TV, it would be car related."

Former champions Stewart, Jeff Gordon and Matt Kenseth have all retired over the last three years, making Busch's '04 crown the oldest of any active driver. But he's in no rush to join his contemporaries and call it quits. Busch would like to keep racing beyond this season and said his personal life is finally as settled as it's been over his career. He recently celebrated his first anniversary with his wife, Ashley, a competitive polo player.

"It's really been a wonderful time in my life," Busch said.

Byron balancing Cup career with college classwork

By MARK LONG
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — NASCAR Cup Series rookie William Byron had some work to do, and not all on the racetrack.

After posting the fifth-fastest lap for Daytona 500 pole qualifying Sunday, Byron said he will have to catch up on his college class work.

The 20-year-old Byron, one of four Cup drivers at Hendrick Motorsports, takes online classes at Liberty University. The Christian college based in Lynchburg, Va., has sponsored Byron since he started his racing career in the NASCAR K&N Pro Series East Series at age 16.

"I can do it pretty much when I want," Byron said. "It's really flexible as far as my schedule goes. I do it basically before I get to the racetrack, and it's fun. It's cool. It kind of gives me a chance to get away from everything for a little bit. I enjoy that part of it."

Byron spent one semester on Liberty's campus in 2016 before deciding to pursue



TERRY RENNA/AP

William Byron adjusts his ear plugs before practice Saturday at Daytona International Speedway.

a business communications degree online.

"I just kind of manage it whenever I can, so it's not too bad," Byron said. "They work

with me."

Byron's college work is due every Monday. He got his assignments turned in early before traveling to Daytona International Speedway for pole qualifying.

He handled his business on the track Sunday with an equal amount of ease.

Byron is beginning his first full season driving the famed No. 14 Chevrolet for Hendrick. He won the Xfinity Series championship last year for JR Motorsports. He won a series-high seven races in the Trucks Series in 2016, but got knocked out of the title chase and finished fifth. He also won the K&N Pro Series East championship in 2015.

Before that, Byron won 33 of 69 races to become the Legend Car Young Lions Division champion at the age of 15 in 2013. He also dual-enrolled in Liberty's Online Academy to get a jump-start on his college education.

"I would say that the hard part was getting to this point, being in this car," said Byron, whose Hendrick teammates are seven-time Cup champion Jimmie John-

son, Chase Elliott and Daytona 500 pole-sitter Alex Bowman.

"The hard part was getting that opportunity, and now ... everyone that's pitching in to make this happen, that part is fun, and it's exciting. And it's a chance to go out there and make a name for yourself."

"So I don't feel like it's that difficult. I feel like I can do what I need to do in the race car, and that's going to take care of itself. I think the hard part was getting to that point."

Byron returned to Daytona on Wednesday and then got back in the car for more practice Thursday. His starting spot for "The Great American Race" was set in the twin qualifying races Thursday night.

"Reasonable expectation would be just to finish first, but that's going to take a lot," he said. "I've got to be aggressive. I've got to be smart. ... You can't really hide at these kinds of racetracks. I think the best thing for me to do is kind of do what I did here in the Xfinity car and keep in mind what the Cup car does differently, and hopefully combine all that together."

AUTO RACING

MONSTER ENERGY NASCAR CUP PREVIEW

Reigning and rebuilding

Champ Truex feeling 'zero pressure'

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Martin Truex Jr. has been all over the country during his brief reign as NASCAR's newest champion.

Since winning his first Cup title in November, Truex has celebrated in Las Vegas, New York, Denver, Charlotte, Toronto and last week, Minneapolis, where he watched his beloved Philadelphia Eagles win the Super Bowl.

It was the final party for Truex, who goes back to work this week along with the rest of NASCAR to get ready for the 2018 season. The season-opening Daytona 500 is Feb. 18, and qualifying for "The Great American Race" is Sunday.

Truex led nearly every statistical category in 2017, including notching a series-leading eight victories.

"I feel zero pressure about starting the new season," Truex said. "We're comfortable in what we are doing and having a lot of fun at the same time."

Truex doesn't have a teammate this year as Furniture Row moves back to a one-car operation. The change is one of the small ripples in a major wave that affected the NASCAR landscape.

Erik Jones, who had been on loan to Furniture Row, moved to Joe Gibbs Racing. To make room for Jones, JGR had to bounce Matt Kenseth from his ride even though the two-time Daytona 500 winner didn't really want to retire.

Kenseth wasn't alone: Danica Patrick lost her ride, making the Daytona 500 her final NASCAR race, and Kasey Kahne was forced out at Hendrick Motorsports and took a lesser job with Leavine Family Racing that created decent upheaval among the mid-pack racers.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. retired at the end of last season, but will still have a very heavy NASCAR presence. He will serve as grand marshal for the Daytona 500, will be part of NBC's broadcast team and has been very clear he wants to be part of NASCAR's future in a non-driving role.

The on-track attention will focus on NASCAR's young drivers. Hendrick Motorsports hired Xfinity Series champion William Byron to replace Kahne and slid Alex Bowman into Earnhardt's seat. Hendrick still has seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson in the stable as well as budding star Chase Elliott.

Elliott spent the past two years driving the No. 24 but is switching to the No. 9—the number his Hall of Fame father donned for most of his career. Before Earnhardt Jr. locked down NASCAR's most popular driver award, Bill Elliott owned the category. With Chase Elliott now in the No. 9 Chevrolet, fans may flock to his camp.

But Elliott is out to win races and not a popularity contest. Entering his third season in the Cup Series, he's still seeking his first victory.

"There's guys that people like and

there's guys that people don't like. That's what makes the sport, not just one person that everybody likes," Elliott said.

"Not everybody liked Dale. That's just the facts. Most people did. The majority did. But a lot of other people have other drivers, too. It's not just about one person."

Team Penske has expanded to three cars to add Ryan Blaney to its lineup, and he's already a hit with fans. Close friend Bubba Wallace got a promotion to the Cup Series this season and will drive for Richard Petty Motorsports.

Wallace is the first black driver to win a national series NASCAR race since 1963. Jones and Daniel Suarez, the only Mexican driver in the Cup Series, make up the other half of Gibbs' lineup.

The grid is getting younger and younger, and there's been disagreement among veteran drivers about NASCAR's push to spotlight the fresh faces.

The fans will be the big winners this year because the younger drivers are more accessible, and the veterans are aware of the need for increased fan engagement.

Wallace said newer drivers have to build brands and find sponsorship, unlike drivers of the past two decades, when fully funded rides were far easier for no-name drivers to nab on the promise of future success.

"I have 13 (sponsored) races, so I have to put myself out there. I have to sell myself," Wallace said.

Funding is an issue across all motorsports, and NASCAR's teams are scratching their heads as they rework budgets.

Very few drivers have just one primary sponsor anymore; most split their season between dozens of brands in various funding roles, and some drivers have to bring their own money just to get a return call on a mediocre ride.

NASCAR is in its own sponsorship waltz, too.

It's the second season of Monster's entitlement sponsorship of the Cup Series, but there has been near silence from the company on its future in the sport.

Monster had a splashy debut race in which Monster-sponsored driver Kurt Busch won the Daytona 500, and that race alone was a massive return on its investment. Monster is back on both Busch's car and as the series sponsor, but interest beyond NASCAR is unknown.

NASCAR made a behind-the-scenes move before the season when Ben Kennedy, great-grandson of NASCAR founder Bill France Sr., stopped racing and became the company's general manager of the Truck Series.

It's an obvious entry point for Kennedy to join the family business, and a sign that NASCAR chairman Brian France and ISC head Lesa France Kennedy are aware that ownership may be in need of a youth movement as well.

"Ben will draw upon his years of experience across NASCAR's grassroots and national series," NASCAR president Brent Dewar said.

"With promising young drivers and experienced veterans battling it out in close, side-by-side racing, Ben truly understands that NASCAR has the potential to be a star. Bowman and Byron? No one knows yet. Byron won seven races as a rookie in the



TERRY RENNA/AP

Car owner Rick Hendrick, front, with three of his team drivers, from back left, Alex Bowman, Jimmie Johnson and Chase Elliott, stand on pit road before qualifying for the Daytona 500. Hendrick Motorsports had a strong opening to Speedweeks by putting Alex Bowman on the pole for the Daytona 500. The team owner doesn't believe the rest of the season will be so easy.

Hendrick expects bumps with young lineup

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Rick Hendrick threw a glamorous party last fall when he formally introduced his 2018 driver lineup.

It was a lavish car unveiling that used lasers, spotlights and an emcee to celebrate a Hendrick Motorsports roster that had undergone a dramatic makeover.

Each of the four drivers was paired with someone for the event. Chase Elliott was joined by his Hall of Fame father, Bill, who helped uncover the new No. 9 his son will drive this year in his honor.

William Byron was introduced with Jeff Gordon, who won four titles in Byron's new No. 24. Alex Bowman came out with Dale Earnhardt Jr., the guy who helped him get his ride when Earnhardt retired. The team owner accompanied seven-time NASCAR champion and Hendrick frontman Jimmie Johnson.

Standing next to glittering new race cars, the quartet was able to briefly mask the striking youthfulness of Hendrick's rebuilt organization.

Bowman, who sat out all of last year waiting for Earnhardt's seat to open, put a Hendrick car on the Daytona 500 pole for a record-tying fourth consecutive year. Johnson was third fastest. Byron, a rookie rushed into a Cup car because Kasey Kahne was fired, was fifth. Elliott was 10th.

"We've got a lot of racing to do and we're going to make mistakes," Hendrick said. "But to come down here, it's a statement by the whole organization to run four cars and get them that close."

Hendrick preemptively noted that the organization may have a roller-coaster season, largely because of the various résumés on his roster.

Johnson is the best of his era, and even though Elliott is entering just his third season, he made NASCAR's playoffs last year and proved he has the potential to be a star.

Bowman and Byron? No one knows yet. Byron won seven races as a rookie in the

Truck Series in 2016 and would have won the championship, too, but an engine failure stopped him nine laps away from what should have been win No. 8.

He won the Xfinity Series title last year, earning the promotion to the Cup series. His debut will be the Daytona 500. He's 20.

Bowman had a brief career as a backmarker in the Cup Series, but was basically out of a ride when he received a lifeline from Earnhardt. JR Motorsports got Bowman nine Xfinity Series races in 2016, and when Earnhardt was sidelined, he pushed Hendrick to put Bowman in the car.

Bowman was good enough in those 10 races — a golden-ticket-type audition — and landed the job full time when Earnhardt retired. He had to sit out all of last year as he waited, but Hendrick made it up to him with an engine that has him on the Daytona 500 pole. He's 24.

Aside from Johnson, in his 17th season, the roster has a combined 158 Cup starts with zero victories. It's three kids, Hendrick views it, at the start of their careers.

Hendrick knows there will be bumps. But he doesn't care because there's some fresh air in the building.

"It's fun, and that's what I need at this point in my life. I need to have some fun," Hendrick said.

Winning the pole was definitely fun, and Hendrick used the opportunity to back Bowman into a bet in which the two will drag race their Corvettes. The loser also will lose his ride. Bowman is still making payments to a Hendrick dealership on his car.

This is, Hendrick said, like 1993 when 21-year-old Gordon blazed his way into the organization with a ridiculous mustache and a briefcase that carried nothing but a racing magazine and a Game Boy.

"These young guys, I mean, I'm kind of reliving Gordon with his little pencil mustache," Hendrick said. "When Jeff Gordon came along, I just saw something in him that I said, 'All that talent, just put him in the right spot and he's going to do well.'"

"We had good luck with that."

WINTER OLYMPICS

Men's skeleton

Yun in position for gold

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Yun Sungbin has spent thousands of hours at the sliding track his nation built for the Pyeongchang Olympics, studying every nuance and scrutinizing every inch.

He knows it better than anyone alive.

And the payoff for that work is potentially two runs away.

South Korea has never been close to an Olympic medal in any sliding sport, and Yun — the one his nation identified as the slider with the most potential of becoming a star at the games — is expected to change all that. He emerged from Thursday's first two runs of the men's skeleton competition with a huge lead over Nikita Tregubov, one of the Olympic Athletes from Russia.

"I didn't show 100 percent, so I will show 100 percent (Friday)," Yun said.

Yun's time: 1 minute, 40.35 seconds. Thousands of his countrymen showed up on Thursday morning to watch, and organizers expect even more on Friday when he will be the overwhelming favorite to emerge from the final two runs as a gold medalist.

"I think it would be more of a surprise if he didn't win a gold," U.S. skeleton veteran John Daly said.

It was not a banner start for the U.S., which will need to seriously rally to reach the medal mix. Matt Antoine, the reigning Olympic bronze medalist, had a strong second run and will enter Friday in 11th place. Daly, back in his third Olympics after a brief retirement following a last-run debacle in Sochi, is tied for 13th.

Unless Yun makes a huge mistake, it's over. His margin over Tregubov is 0.74 seconds. That's a lifetime in sliding.



WONG MAYE-E/AP

Sungbin Yun of South Korea brakes in the finish area during the men's skeleton competition at the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.



NATHAN DENETTE, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Canada forward Marie-Philip Poulin, left, battles with United States forward Monique Lamoureux-Morando, right, as Canada goaltender Genevieve Lacasse had her helmet taken off Thursday during the third period of a preliminary round game at the Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea.

Women's hockey

Canada prevails in first meeting with Americans

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — The Americans and Canadians pushed, shoved and grabbed each other, sometimes from behind, sometimes mask to mask, and bodies were crashing to the ice repeatedly in front of the net.

All of this with no medal on the line, either. Meghan Agosta and Sara Nurse each scored in the second period and defending Olympic champion Canada clinched the top spot in pool play by edging the United States 2-1 on Thursday in a rough-and-tumble early showdown between the dominant powers in women's hockey. It could have been a mere preview of the battle for gold expected to come next week.

Genevieve Lacasse made 44 saves, including stopping Hilary Knight at the post inside the final 90 seconds. Brianna Decker hit two posts, the second in the final seconds, before the two rivals ended up in a scrum. Officials reviewed the final play and ruled no goal. The Canadians also had two goals disallowed earlier in a game that showed just how far these two teams are above the rest of the field — and how much they want to beat each other.

"It's a rivalry," U.S. coach Robb Stauber said of the physical play. "What else would anybody expect?"

Canada coach Laura Schuler was happy with the win, especially Lacasse's performance.

"She played outstanding for us," Schuler said. Kendall Coyne scored the lone goal for the Americans.

Canada and the United States are the only countries to ever win women's hockey gold at the Olympics. The Americans won in 1998 when women's hockey joined the Olympics, but Canada is looking for a fifth straight title.

The two played eight times last fall through a pre-Olympic exhibition tour and the Four Nations Cup. The United States won two of the first three, but



JULIO CORTES/AP

Canada's Jocelyne Larocque, left, collides with Brianna Decker of the United States during the third period. Canada won 2-1.

Canada now has won five straight against their biggest and only rival.

"We're not worried about it, nope," Stauber said. "We're focused on the things that we can control, and certainly these games that we've played in the past have nothing to do with our future. Absolutely nothing to do with our future."

Luge team relay

History made by Germans

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — When the International Olympic Committee added a luge team relay to the program seven years ago, part of the rationalization was that it would provide more medal chances for women.

Natalie Geisenberger and Alex Gough surely approve.

Geisenberger became the first Olympian ever to win four luge gold medals by helping Germany win the team relay on Thursday night in the sport's final event at the Pyeongchang Games. Canada won the silver, giving Gough her second medal in the last three days — which sounds even more remarkable when noting that her country was 0-for-forever in luge before her bronze in the women's race on Monday.

Ask anyone in the race, and it will be unanimous: The team relay is a hit.

"It's definitely a spectator favorite," said Canada's Sam Edney, who teamed with Gough and the doubles sled of Tristan Walker and Justin Smith for the first Olympic medal of his career in what will almost certainly be his final slide before retirement. "The athletes love it, the coaches love it, the officials love it."

Austria, with Madeleine Eggle, men's gold medalist David Gleirscher and doubles sliders Peter Penz and Georg Fischler was third. The U.S. was fourth, the team of Summer Britcher, Chris Mazdzer, Mike Mortensen and Jayson Terdiman missing a medal by about one-tenth of a second.

"I love my teammates, and I think the important thing that I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of this team and to have them in my life," Britcher said.

Geisenberger has two singles golds and two relay golds, this one coming with Johannes Ludwig, Tobias Wendl and Tobias Arlt. Past luge stars like Germany's Georg Hackl and Italy's Armin Zoeggeler never got the chance to pad their Olympic résumés with a team relay, so there certainly won't be a true consensus in the argument of whether Geisenberger is the best Olympic luger ever.

The format is simple.

There's a men's slider, a women's slider and a doubles duo as part of each team, each of them getting one run down the track. At the finish line, they need to sit up — with the sled still going at basically top speed — and smack a pad that sends up an all-clear signal for the next sled to start making its way down the track (or stop the clock if it's the third sled).

If someone misses the pad, it's like dropping the baton in track and field. Game over.

WINTER OLYMPICS



WAYNE CARROLL/AP

U.S. cross-country skier Kikkan Randall continued to train in 2016 while she was pregnant. Randall is the only mother on the U.S. Olympic Team, which also has 20 fathers this year.

Olympians juggle parenthood, goals

By ERRIN HAINES WHACK
Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — After finishing her fourth Winter Games in Sochi, Kikkan Randall decided: It was time to have a baby. But the cross-country skiing champion wasn't ready to give up her Olympic goals.

So, at 32, she looked at the calendar and plotted her window: 2016, a gap year. No World Cup circuit and no Olympics. If things worked out as planned, Randall could get pregnant, give birth and be back in competition and qualify for Pyeongchang.

It's the kind of calculation many ambitious career women are forced to make. For the three-time World Cup Sprint Champion regarded as a pioneer of American women's skiing, there was one more challenge ahead before retirement: Pushing herself to a fifth and final Olympics after having a child.

"I'd worked really hard to get the pinnacle of skiing ... I knew I couldn't wait another four years to start a family," said Randall, now 35, whose record-setting résumé has earned her the nickname "Kikkanimal."

"I'd had an amazing career up to that point," Randall said. "I just felt like, in a sport like cross-country, where it takes so many years to develop to your top potential, I didn't want to have to make the choice of career or family. I had a feeling I would be able to come back to skiing stronger, but it was definitely an unknown. If I had to pick one season to miss, it was a good one."

Randall did get pregnant in 2015. Her son, Breck, was born the following spring. She is the only mother on the U.S. Olympic

Team, which also has 20 fathers this year.

When Randall returned to competition in 2016, she wasn't the only new mom on skis. Randall and her friend and competitor, Aino-Kaisa Saarinen of Finland, gave birth within two weeks of each other. Marit Bjørgen of Norway — regarded as the best woman in the sport — had her child four months earlier. French skiers Aurora Jean, Anouk Faivre-Picon and Caroline Hugue, and Slovenia's Katja Višnar had new babies, too.

Most are competing in Pyeongchang, and have had to balance the challenges of parenthood and career with the help of fellow athletes, friends and family — and not always with the support of their workplace.

"It's a sport that requires so much time," said Randall's husband, former Canadian race skier Jeff Ellis. "It's impressive what they've done as moms."

After a couple of tries, Randall conceived in August 2015. She trained throughout her pregnancy, sticking to a shortened version of her twice-a-day routine, including running through her seventh month, interval training to keep her heart rate up, and weight training — which got her some funny looks in the gym as her belly grew.

Randall delivered Breck in April and, like many moms, was back at work after six weeks, missing only a month of the training season. She would time feedings around her training, and bring Breck along in a baby jogger for hikes and runs. Easing the transition was a supportive husband, who works only in the winter, and Randall's parents, who live close by in Anchorage.

After landing triple axel, Nagasu has plenty more

By BARRY WILNER
Associated Press

The wonderful thing about the inspiring shall we call it Olympian? — story of Mirai Nagasu is that it's not over. Not even close.

Nagasu has gone from teenage wunderkind and U.S. champion to fourth-place finisher at the Vancouver Olympics to passed over and nearly forgotten. And now, a Pyeongchang Games bronze medalist with, she vows, more to come.

"It has a really special meaning to it because it feels like I've come full circle," the 24-year-old Nagasu said after not only helping the Americans to a team bronze, but becoming the first U.S. woman to land a triple axel in the Olympics.

"It was really heartbreaking not to be named to the team in Sochi," she added of being bumped for the more internationally accomplished Ashley Wagner by a federation panel four years ago. "But it was something not meant to be. I think that experience changed me as a skater. I took a step back and realized some things are not worth obsessing. I wanted to be on another Olympic team, but it took time to evolve myself as a person and a skater."

That evolution, which included a slump in which Nagasu finished 10th at nationals in 2015, has been overseen by renowned coach Tom Zakrajsek, who believes the best is yet to come. Quite possibly next week in the individual women's event.

"Mirai is ready to lay everything down and send some awesome shots in the singles events and we'll see how the chips fall," said Zakrajsek, who began working with her four months after she was left off the 2014 Olympic squad. "Ice is slippery, you know, and anything can happen. There's a whole history of Americans not being expected to be on the podium, like Paul Wylie, Sarah Hughes. We are working for the podium and she will put it all out there."

Which means, of course, trying the triple axel in both the short program and the free skate. It's not quite a secret weapon, but it's something no other top-level woman has in her arsenal.

"She didn't just land it, she spiked it," Zakrajsek said. "And that gave her confidence, and everything



PHOTOS BY JULIE JACOBSON/AP

Mirai Nagasu of the United States performs during the ladies single free skate during the team competition at the Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea. Nagasu became the first U.S. woman to land a triple axel at the Olympics.

she did will give her confidence going forward. In people's minds, maybe they look at her differently for the singles event."

AP Sports Writer Dave Skretta contributed to this report.



Mirai Nagasu reacts after her performance Monday in the ladies single free skate.

WINTER OLYMPICS



PETER DEJONG/AP

American Lindsey Jacobellis says she's long since moved past her misstep that cost her a gold medal at the 2006 Olympics.

Snowboarding

Jacobellis at peace with legacy

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — The most accomplished snowboarder in history knows the question is coming. Because the question comes every four years.

No matter how many races she wins. No matter how many world championships she picks up. No matter what she's done to grow the sport she's helped define for more than a decade.

So Lindsey Jacobellis sets her jaw and steels herself every time the Olympics roll around, well aware that for some she'll never outrun a three-second error in judgment in Turin as a 20-year-old, when gold somehow morphed into silver when her attempt to add a little bit of sauce to her winning run ended up with her ever-so-briefly sitting down in the Italian Alps.

So go ahead. Ask the question. "I don't look back at all," said Jacobellis, who will make a fourth bid for Olympic gold in women's snowboardcross on Friday. "Right now I'm here. What year is it? It's 2018. We're in Pyeongchang and I'm focusing on that."

Even if the public at large can't. She is by every metric "the GOAT" (slang for the Greatest of All Time). Five world championships. Nine X Games wins. More than two dozen World Cup victories. A staggering 49 podium finishes in a discipline her good friend and American teammate Jonathan Cheever says is only fit for masochists because of its pure unpredictability.

Maybe her fourth Games will provide catharsis. Maybe it won't. Jacobellis doesn't need to prove anything to herself or the close-knit community that understands she's far more than those three seconds all those years ago.

"She's the best snowboard-crossover that ever lived," said teammate Nick Baumgartner. "There's no shame in that."

Freestyle skiing

Caldwell goes big, comes up short

Defending world champ fails to crack top 12

By EDDIE PELLIS
Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — American freestyle skier Ashley Caldwell admits it: She loves the risk because she loves the reward.

On Thursday night at the Olympics, there was no prize for her daring.

The foremost envelope pusher in the dangerous sport of aerials failed to land either of her triple-flipping jumps in qualifying. She failed to crack the top 12, and will watch the final from the sidelines. It's a loss for her, but also for the sport, where Caldwell is the only jumper in the field who consistently tries triples, whether in qualifying or the final.

"When you seize the reward, everyone's all happy, dandy, go-lucky," Caldwell said. "And when you don't, either it hurts, or it hurts ... physically or emotionally, and this is an emotional pain."

A physical one, too. Though Caldwell was reluctant to use it as an excuse, she was victimized by the harsh winds that have whipped through the action park all week. Two days before qualifying, a swirling wind caught her during a practice jump, threw her off line and she landed hard on her shoulder.

U.S. coach Todd Ossian said it was remarkable Caldwell was



KIN CHEUNG/AP

The United States' Ashley Caldwell jumps during the women's aerials qualifying on Thursday in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

able to return in time to compete.

"She runs on adrenaline," Ossian said. "Certainly, with her (degree of difficulty), she has to."

Caldwell started going big when she was a kid and realized she could do everything the boys could do and more. After two trips to the Olympics, where she

finished 10th both times, she decided to take the triples-or-nothing tact in a sport where the vast majority of women try, and often win, with doubles.

Last year, Caldwell won the World Championships by becoming the first woman to cleanly land a triple-flipping, quadruple-

"When you seize the reward, everyone's all happy, dandy, go-lucky. And when you don't, either it hurts, or it hurts ... physically or emotionally, and this is an emotional pain."

Ashley Caldwell

American freestyle skier, who didn't make the aerials final after failing to land either of her triple-flipping jumps in qualifying

twisting jump in competition.

"It was the first time I had every coach come up to me and shake my hand before the score even came up," Ossian said.

Since then, her message hasn't wavered: There may be more consistent jumpers out there, but only one takes the all-or-nothing path every time.

"The nice thing about it is, if you have a result, the impact you're trying to make can be bigger," she said. "If you have a gold medal and you talk about who you are, what you represent, you have more clout."

She's only 24 — young enough to get another chance on the sport's biggest stage.

"She's the world champion and she's done the hardest trick in the world," Ossian said. "She's certainly not done."

Men's hockey

Following loss, US upbeat as it prepares for Slovakia

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — There were smiles, laughs and enthusiastic goal celebrations. It seems the Americans have found their missing energy.

At practice, anyway.

A day after blowing a two-goal, third-period lead and losing to Slovenia in overtime to open Olympic play, the United States was back at practice feeling upbeat and confident. The Americans will face Slovakia on Friday.

"We're excited," alternate captain Noah Welch said. "For 40 minutes, we proved that we're a pretty dangerous team. Had a great video session today. Coaches did a good job of pointing out what we need to be better at, and then the team came out and had probably our best, most upbeat, quick-paced practice that we've had since we've been here."

U.S. players shook off the stunning 3-2 defeat so quickly it was a whiplash of emotions in just over 12 hours. It certainly helps that the Olympic format means no team gets eliminated after pool play, though it doesn't hurt that the U.S. dominated play for the first two periods against Slovenia before the mix of sitting on the lead and running out of gas proved costly. Coach Tony Granato chalked it up to

some mental fatigue.

That can't happen against Slovakia, which upset the favored Russians in regulation across town. "Playing a full 60 minutes" is about as lame of a hockey cliché that exists, but for the U.S. team it's a mantra now after how well it played for 40 minutes before letting the game slip away.

"We have to refresh ourselves and recharge ourselves to be able to try to play that way for 60 minutes," Granato said. "We skate. We've got four lines that can play. We don't have to overplay anybody. If we can sustain the energy that we played with the first two periods, that would be what would help us be successful."

Easier said than done against a Slovakia team that wore down the talented Russians and shut out the U.S. at the pre-Olympic Deutschland Cup in November. The biggest challenge for the U.S. then, now and potentially moving forward, is cashing in on its offensive changes.

"We've got to shoot more," Matt Gilroy said after the U.S. scored just twice on 36 shots against Slovakia. "We've got to get more bodies to the net. Every goaltender's pretty good here and a lot of guys will battle in front, but we've got to sacrifice and get to the net."



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Slovenian players celebrate in front of U.S. goalie Ryan Zapolski after Wednesday's 3-2 victory in overtime of their preliminary round game in Gangneung, South Korea.

WINTER OLYMPICS

Scoreboard

Medals table

Through Feb. 15
39 medal events

Nation	5	8	B	Tot
Norway	6	7	4	17
Germany	4	7	4	15
Canada	4	5	4	13
Netherlands	4	3	4	11
United States	5	5	2	12
Japan	0	4	3	7
France	0	2	3	5
Austria	2	1	3	6
Italy	1	1	3	5
OA Russia	0	1	4	5
Australia	1	0	4	5
Finland	0	0	3	3
South Korea	0	0	3	3
China	0	2	0	2
Slovakia	0	1	1	2
Czech Republic	0	1	1	2
Switzerland	0	1	0	1
Slovenia	0	1	0	1
Kazakhstan	0	0	1	1
Spain	0	0	1	1

Thursday's medalists

ALPINE SKIING

Men's Downhill

GOLD—Åksel Lund Svindal, Norway
SILVER—Kjetil Jansrud, Norway
BRONZE—Beat Feuz, Switzerland

Women's Slalom

GOLD—Michaela Shiggins, United States
SILVER—Ragnhild Mowinckel, Norway
BRONZE—Federica Brignone, Italy

Men's 20km

GOLD—Johannes Thingnes Bø, Norway
SILVER—Jakov Fak, Slovenia
BRONZE—Dominik Landertinger, Austria

Women's 15km

GOLD—Hanna Öberg, Sweden
SILVER—Anastasiya Kuzmina, Slovakia
BRONZE—Laura Dahlmeier, Germany

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Women's 10km Freestyle

GOLD—Ragnhild Haga, Norway
SILVER—Charlotte Kalla, Sweden
BRONZE—Marit Björgen, Norway

Men's 15km

GOLD—Germany (Aliona Savchenko, Bruno Massot)
SILVER—China (Han Cong, Sui Wenjing)
BRONZE—Canada (Meagan Duhamel, Eric Radford)

Luge

Men's 1

GOLD—Germany 1 (Johannes Ludwig, Niklas Giesenberger, Tobias Arlt, Tobias Wendl)
SILVER—Canada 1 (Sam Edney, Alexander Tristram Walker, Justin Stintz)
BRONZE—Austria 1 (David Gleirscher, Madeleine Eggle, Gregor Fischer, Peter Penz)

Men's Snowboard Cross

GOLD—Pierre Vaultier, France
SILVER—Jarrod Hughes, Australia
BRONZE—Regino Hernandez, Spain

SPEEDSKATING

Men's 1000m

GOLD—Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
SILVER—Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
BRONZE—Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Thursday's results

ALPINE SKIING

Men's Downhill

1. (7) Åksel Lund Svindal, Norway, 1:40:25.
 2. (1) Kjetil Jansrud, Norway, 1:40:37.
 3. (5) Beat Feuz, Switzerland, 1:40:43.
 4. (3) Dominik Landertinger, Austria, 1:40:19.
 5. (4) Thomas Dressen, Germany, 1:41:03.

Women's Slalom

1. (1) Michaela Shiggins, United States, 1:41:08.
 2. (17) Vincent Kriechmayr, Austria, 1:41:19.
 3. (8) Bruce Rogge, France, 1:41:39.
 4. (16) Bryce Bennett, United States, 1:42:22.
 5. (10) Jared Goulding, United States, 1:42:59.

Men's 20km

1. (4) Ryan Cochran-Siegle, United States, 1:42:36.
 2. (30) Willy Mänt, United States, 1:43:72.

Women's Giant Slalom

1. (1) Shiffrin, United States (2), 1:10:82.
 2. (10) Ragnhild Mowinckel, Norway (4), 1:11:17.
 3. (3) Federica Brignone, Italy (3), 1:10:91.
 4. (10) Viktoria Rebensburg, Germany (8), 1:11:45.
 5. (5) Maria Bässino, Italy (5), 1:11:19.

Men's 15km

1. (1) Johannes Thingnes Bø, Norway, 48:30.
 2. (2) Jakov Fak, Slovenia, 48:39.
 3. (3) Dominik Landertinger, Austria, 48:39.

Men's 10km

1. (1) Johannes Thingnes Bø, Norway, 48:30.
 2. (2) Jakov Fak, Slovenia, 48:39.
 3. (3) Dominik Landertinger, Austria, 48:39.

Men's 15km

1. (1) Johannes Thingnes Bø, Norway, 48:30.
 2. (2) Jakov Fak, Slovenia, 48:39.
 3. (3) Dominik Landertinger, Austria, 48:39.

48:18.0 (0).
 48:32.9 (1).
 5. Martin Fourcade, France, 48:46.2 (2).
 6. Benjamin Weger, Switzerland, 48:52.4 (1).
 7. Michael Krcmar, Czech Republic, 49:19.3 (1).
 8. Fredrik Lindstrom, Sweden, 49:25.9 (1).

U.S. Finishers

41. Tim Burke, United States, 52:05.7
 44. Sean Doherty, United States, 52:25.6
 (3).
 51. Lowell Bailey, United States, 52:56.8
 54:31.1 (5).

Women's 15km

1. Hanna Öberg, Sweden, 41:07.2 (0).
 2. Anastasiya Kuzmina, Slovakia, 41:07.2 (0).
 3. Laura Dahlmeier, Germany, 41:48.4
 (1).
 4. Franziska Preuss, Germany, 42:06.9
 (5).
 5. Paulina Fialkova, Slovakia, 42:09.5
 (1).
 6. Monika Holcova, Poland, 43:02.0 (1).
 7. Dorothea Wierer, Italy, 43:15.8 (2).
 8. Elisa Gasparin, Switzerland, 43:22.4
 (1).

U.S. Finishers

19. Susan Dunklee, United States, 44:33.2 (2).
 21. Joanne Reid, United States, 44:41.3
 (2).
 62. Clare Egan, United States, 48:00.8
 (4).
 67. Emily Dreissigacker, United States, 48:16.4 (4).

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Women's 10km Freestyle

1. Ragnhild Haga, Norway, 25:00.5.
 2. Charlotte Kalla, Sweden, 25:20.8.
 3. Marit Björgen, Norway, 25:32.4.
 3. Krista Parmakoski, Finland, 25:32.4.
 4. Jessica Diggins, United States, 25:35.7.
 6. Nathalie von Siebenthal, Switzerland, 25:50.3.
 7. Ingvald Flugstad Ostberg, Norway, 26:05.6.
 8. Anastasiya Sedova, OA Russia, 26:07.2 (0).

U.S. Finishers

15. Sadie Björnsen, United States, 26:42.6.
 16. Kikkan Randall, United States, 26:50.0.
 30. Elizabeth Stephen, United States, 27:35.5.

FIGURE SKATING

Final Ranking

(Short and free programs in parentheses)

1. Aliona Savchenko and Bruno Massot, Germany (4, 76:59, 1, 159:31), 235.50.
 2. Meagan Duhamel and Eric Radford, Canada (2, 76:82, 2, 153:30), 230.15.
 4. Evgenia Tarasova and Vladimir Morozov, OA Russia (2, 81:68, 4, 143:25).
 5. Vanessa James and Morgan Cipres, France (6, 75:34, 5, 143:19), 218.53.
 6. Valeria Marchei and Ondrej Hotarek, Italy (7, 74:50, 6, 142:07), 216.59.
 7. Natalia Zabikova and Alexander Enbert, OA Russia (8, 74:35, 7, 138:53), 212.88.
 8. Yu Xiaoyu and Zhang Hao, China (5, 75:58, 11, 128:52), 204.10.
 9. Juliana Seguin and Charlie Biodeau, Canada (12, 67:87, 8, 136:50), 204.02.
 10. Nicole Della Monica and Matteo Guarise, Italy (9, 74:00, 10, 128:74), 202.12.

U.S. Finishers

15. Chris Reinert and Alisa Cismeca Krieger, United States (14, 65:55, 15, 120:27), 185.82.

Luge

Team Relay

1. Germany 1 (Johannes Ludwig, Natalie Giesenberger, Tobias Arlt, Tobias Wendl), 2:25:17.
 2. Canada 1 (Sam Edney, Alex Gough, Tristan Walker, Justin Stintz), 2:24:87.
 3. Austria 1 (David Gleirscher, Madeleine Eggle, Gregor Fischer, Peter Penz), 2:24:46.
 4. United States 1 (Christopher Mazdzer, Jayson Terdiman, Sumner Britcher, Matthew Petersen), 2:24:61.
 5. Italy 1 (Dominik Fischnaller, Andrea Vötter, Gabian Meller, Ivan Nagler), 2:25:03.
 6. Russia 1 (Ulla Zirne, Kristers Aparits, Andris Špis, Juris Špis), 2:25:15.
 7. Austria 1 (Ekaterina Streltsova, Roman Repilov, Vladislav Antonov, Aleksandra Denisenko), 2:25:34.
 8. Poland 1 (Maciej Krowczyński, Ewa Kulik-Kusyk, Wojciech Chmielewski, Michał Szwed), 2:26:12.
 9. South Korea 1 (Park Jin-Young, Frisch Allert, Lim Namkyu, Cho Jung Myung), 2:26:54.
 10. Romania 1 (Reluca Stratamatur, Valentin Sturtu, Cosmin Atanasiu, Paul Fusu), 2:26:84.
 11. Switzerland 1 (Jozsef Nisli, Karol Stuchlik, Katarina Simanovska, Marek Solcankov), 2:26:90.
 12. Czech Republic 1 (Ondrej Hanyk, Tereza Noskova, Antonin Brz, Lukas Broz), 2:27:01.
 13. Ukraine 1 (Oleksandr Boholobov, Oleksandr Stogov, Antol Dukach, Roman Zakharuk), 2:31:03.

U.S. Finishers

1. Alex Pullin, Australia (Q).
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia (Q).

Snowboard

Men's 1000m

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Women's 1000m

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain

Men's 1500m

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Women's 1500m

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain

Men's 2000m

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Women's 2000m

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain

Men's 3000m

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Women's 3000m

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain

Men's 4000m

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Women's 4000m

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain

Men's 5000m

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Women's 5000m

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain

Men's 6000m

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy

Women's 6000m

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain

3. Pierre Vaultier, France (Q).
 4. Cameron Botton, Australia.
 5. Alessandro Hämmerle, Austria.
 NR. Nikolay Oluyin, OA Russia, DNS.

Heat 2

1. Regino Hernandez, Spain (Q).
 2. Nick Baumgartner, United States (Q).
 3. Mick Dierdorff, United States (Q).
 4. Martin Nori, Germany.
 5. Anton Lindfors, Finland.
 NR. Christopher Robanske, Canada, DNS.

Final B

1. Alessandro Hämmerle, Austria.
 2. Martin Nori, Germany.
 3. Anton Lindfors, Finland.
 4. Cameron Botton, Australia.
 NR. Nikolay Oluyin, OA Russia, DNS.
 NR. Christopher Robanske, Canada, DNS.

Final A

1. Pierre Vaultier, France.
 2. Jarrod Hughes, Australia.
 3. Regino Hernandez, Spain.
 4. Nick Baumgartner, United States.
 5. Mick Dierdorff, United States.
 NR. Alex Pullin, Australia, DNS.

Men's 10000

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada, 12:39.77.
 2. Jorrit Bergsma, Netherlands, 12:41.98.
 3. Nicola Tumolero, Italy, 12:54.32.
 4. Lee Seung-Hoon, South Korea, 12:55.54.
 5. Jordan Behcos, Canada, 12:59.51.
 6. Sven Kramer, Netherlands, 13:01.02.
 7. Patrick Beckert, Germany, 13:01.94.
 8. Bart Swings, Belgium, 13:03.53.
 9. Moritz Geisreiter, Germany, 13:06.35.
 10. Ryosuke Tauchiya, Japan, 13:10.31.
 11. Haavard Bakkø, Norway, 13:17.47.
 12. Davide Ghiotto, Italy, 13:27.09.

Men's 5000

1. Ted Jan Blomen, Canada, 12:39.77.
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WINTER OLYMPICS

BOBSLED

Time to find the sport's next driving star

Without past medalists, men's races wide open; women have clear podium favorites

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

This could be the most uncertain Olympic bobsled competition in some time.

The most wide open, too.

In 2014, it was widely expected that Russia would be tough to beat in the two- and four-man races. And it was, with Alexandr Zubkov winning gold in both events, only to have those medals stripped as part of the fallout from the state-sponsored doping program that left a giant cloud over the home team at the Sochi Games.

In 2010, Steven Holcomb and his famed "Night Train" sled lived up to expectations and finally ended the Americans' 62-year gold medal drought in the Olympic four-man race. In 2006, Andre Lange of Germany was the consensus pick to pull off the daunting double — gold in both events — and he delivered.

Zubkov is now banned. Holcomb died last year. Lange has long been retired.

So this year in Pyeongchang, a new men's Olympic bobsled driving star will have to emerge. Germany, Canada, Latvia, Switzerland and the U.S. all believe they have a realistic chance of reaching the medal podium, and so will the host South Koreans,

though they would still seem to be a longshot.

The women's bobsled race is much easier to figure out, even with 20 sleds. There are five drivers with the most realistic medal shots.

Canada's Kaillie Humphries is chasing her third straight gold medal. Elana Meyers Taylor and Jamie Greubel Poser of the U.S. won silver and bronze, respectively, in 2014 and German drivers Mariama Jamanka and Stephanie Schneider have also worked their way toward the top of the world rankings.

Here's some things to know about bobsled in the Pyeongchang Olympics:

MEDAL FAVORITES: Germany in men's bobsled, the U.S. and Canada in women's bobsled.

BEST RIVALRY: They're friends, but that doesn't stop Canada's Kaillie Humphries and U.S. star Elana Meyers Taylor from also being rivals. They finished first and second, respectively, in Sochi, and Humphries is going for her third straight gold. Another wrinkle in this cold war of sorts: Todd Hays, the longtime U.S. bobsledder and coach, is now helping coach the Canadians.

RISING STARS: Codie Bascue and Evan Weinstock are two sliders that the U.S. program has



MICHAEL SONIN/AP

Driver Sgt. Nick Cunningham and Hakeem Abdul-Saboor start a practice run for the two-man bobsled on Thursday. The competition starts Sunday. Cunningham, a member of the Army World Class Athlete Program, also will pilot a four-man sled next week.

pointed to for years as future cornerstones of the program. Their time is now. Pyeongchang marks the Olympic debuts for Bascue, a

pilot, and Weinstock, who teammates boldly predict will go down as the best push athlete in U.S. history.

Competition dates: Men's two-man, Feb. 18-19. Women's two-man, Feb. 20-21. Men's four-man, Feb. 24-25.

ULTIMATE SLIDING MACHINES: They don't handle like race cars, but there's race-car technology at play in bobsledding. BMW works with several national teams, including the U.S., Germany and Canada, among others — with all the programs done separately. Ferrari works with the Italians, and McLaren was part of the British bobsled program in recent years.

GET READY: As in the other sliding sports, bobsled races will likely be determined by Curve 9. There are other tricky spots on the Pyeongchang track, but chances are high that the driver who gets through that turn the best over four runs will reach the medal podium.

WAITING AROUND: Most bobsledders took part in the opening ceremony, but then everyone waited around for more than a week before competition starts. Bobsled goes last in the Olympic sliding program, after luge and skeleton. There are no medals awarded in bobsled until Day 10 of the Games (and the women didn't even start competing until Day 11).

DONT MISS: The two-man race might be completely wide open after six drivers combined to win the first seven World Cup events this season.

Meyers Taylor remembers gold that slipped away

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. — The record books and the result sheets and the photos from the medal podium all make it very clear. Officially, U.S. bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor won a silver medal at the Sochi Olympics.

She has a different perspective.

"I lost gold," she said. "For sure."

That has been part of the burden that Meyers Taylor has carried around for the last four years, a quadrennial that has proven far more difficult than she would have wanted. She struggled with a concussion and confidence problems, and was personally devastated like so many other U.S. sliders were last year by the death of Steven Holcomb — her close friend and a mentor in many respects.

Yet here she is, back for another Olympics, still very much a contender to win the biggest prize in her sport. A bronze medalist as a brakeman in 2010, a silver medalist in her Olympic driving debut in 2014, the 33-year-old Meyers Taylor is heading to the Pyeongchang Games with the simple goal of winning the elusive gold medal she needs for the complete set.

"I know I'm a better driver now than I was four years ago," Meyers Taylor said. "For me, it's always been about continually challenging myself and continually figuring out how to go down the hill faster. I've gotten to the point where it's not as much about gold-silver-bronze — although I want that gold medal more than anything I've ever wanted — but I want to put together four runs that I can walk away and be proud of."

Therein lies the story from Sochi.

There are four runs in an Olympic bobsled race, and Meyers Taylor was the leader after the first, second and third heats at the Sochi Games. Gold looked certain to be



RICK BOWMER/AP

US bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor shows off her medals: bronze from 2010, silver from 2014. She is hoping to win the gold that slipped away at the Sochi Games four years ago.

hers, as long as she made it down the track clean in the final heat.

And that didn't happen.

She smacked the right wall very hard around the midpoint of the final run, costing her tons of speed. Meyers Taylor and brakeman Lauryn Williams wound up finishing one-tenth of a second behind Canada's Kaillie Humphries, who won gold for the second straight Olympics.

"Made a mistake," Meyers Taylor said. "Made a couple mistakes that cost us."

She's recovered nicely. Sliding sports like bobsled rare-

ly find themselves in the spotlight, but Meyers Taylor has become a bit of a celebrity endorser in the past year. She struck deals with Bridgestone, Comcast, Coca-Cola, 24 Hour Fitness and others going into these Olympics, which is fairly remarkable since sliders often toil in anonymity.

It gets even more impressive when considering that her Pyeongchang quest seemed in serious trouble after it took her nearly a full year to recover from a January 2015 concussion. That's no longer a concern.

"We all know what Elana is capable of doing," USA Bobsled and Skeleton CEO Darin Steele said.

Another massive jolt that left her feeling seriously shaken came last spring, when Holcomb was found dead in his room at the Olympic Training Center where so many U.S. bobsledders live and train.

They were very close friends. He was the longtime leader of the team and a gold-medal-winning driver. He will be very much in mind in Korea.

"I know he's helped prepare me for this," Meyers Taylor said.

Meyers Taylor finished second in the World Cup standings this season, behind only Humphries. She contended almost every weekend, medaling seven times in the eight races, but had just one win — a dropout after prevailing 12 times in 20 starts over the previous three years.

That victory this season came in a race where she was pushed by Lolo Jones, who wasn't picked for the Olympic team even though she and Meyers Taylor had won medals in their last seven World Cup starts together. Meyers Taylor is going to Pyeongchang with Olympic rookie Lauren Gibbs as her brakeman, and they showed their potential with a start record in the World Cup season finale at Koenigssee, Germany.

"It showed what we are capable of, and I think that we have even more in the tank," Meyers Taylor said.

WINTER OLYMPICS

Skiing

Svindal oldest to win Alpine gold

Fourth career medal for Norwegian

By GRAHAM DUNBAR
Associated Press

JEONGSEON, South Korea — As he approached his 35th birthday, Aksel Lund Svindal didn't always feel like he would make Olympic history as the oldest Alpine gold medalist.

His body felt the strain of too many high-speed crashes and season-ending surgeries, and it wouldn't let him train at the high intensity he likes.

Fast forward two months from December, and no one was quicker on the downhill course at the Pyeongchang Olympics.

"I am old," said the tough Norwegian, confirming this would be his last Olympics. "So I guess this is the beginning of the end somehow."

He certainly made his last chance count on Thursday, finally getting the only downhill medal missing from an impressive career.

Svindal finished 0.12 seconds faster than teammate and close friend Kjetil Jansrud, making up lost time on a masterful ski on the bottom half of the 1 1/4-mile course.

Beat Feuz of Switzerland took bronze. The world champion — and the standout racer of the classic World Cup downhill in January — was 0.18 behind Svindal's winning time of 1 minute, 40.25 seconds.

The new year brought new hope for Svindal that his body would hold up for the Olympics.

"I was struggling in the beginning of the season," he said, acknowledging the impact of landing four jumps Thursday that made him creak a little. "Definitely the jumps were longer today. I felt that, but it's working better than I feared in December."

Even getting to South Korea was a little voyage into the unknown for Svindal, who ended his past two seasons in January for surgery on his knees. Both were a direct result of a fearsome crash in Kitzbuehel, Austria, in January 2016.

"This is basically the first year I've skied in February for four years or something like that," Svindal said. "I've been in the hospital every other year."

The 2016 crash ensured he missed the Olympic test event in



ALESSANDRO TROVATI/AP

Norway's Aksel Lund Svindal skis during the men's downhill in Jeongseon, South Korea, on Thursday.

South Korea two years ago, which Jansrud won.

The postponement of Sunday's scheduled downhill due to fierce winds bought valuable time and an extra look at the course in the opening part of the combined event on Tuesday. In that race, Svindal was faster than Jansrud in the downhill for the first time.

At race-time Thursday, there was near-perfect calm and cold conditions. It was 34 degrees Fahrenheit under sunshine and blue skies with only a few wispy clouds.

Svindal had uneasy moments, as if tricked by snow made harder and faster by days of buffeting from the wind.

He went wide at one turn and fought through the air off one jump while posting the eventual eighth-fastest time at the mid-point. Fighting for his title,

Svindal clawed it all back and punched the air with his left fist after seeing he had beaten then-leader Feuz.

"I think I pushed just to the right amount and felt fast," said the new Olympic champion, who never led at a time split until the finish.

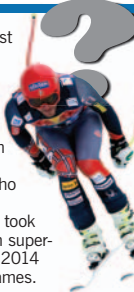
At 35, Svindal is three months older than Mario Matt was in 2014 when the Austrian won the Olympic slalom.

Svindal now has four Olympic medals, taking home one of each color from the Vancouver Games. He also won world championship gold medals in downhill in 2007 and 2013, and two season-long World Cup downhill titles.

Svindal and Jansrud will return to action on Friday in the super-G, which they have won, respectively, at the past two Winter Games.

Did you know

The oldest Olympic medalist in Alpine racing is still American Bode Miller, who was 36 when he took bronze in super-G at the 2014 Sochi Games.



SOURCE: Associated Press



JAC C. HONG/AP

Mikaela Shiffrin skis to victory in the women's giant slalom on Thursday in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

First: Shiffrin moves on to best event after giant slalom victory

FROM BACK PAGE

after the first of Thursday's two runs, Shiffrin did two things during the 3 1/2 hours before the deciding leg of the GS: She took a nap, and then she sneaked onto the adjacent men's course at Yongpung Alpine Center for a little free skiing.

"Then," said Shiffrin's mother, Eileen, who is also a coach, "I think she was just like, 'I'm ready. I'm doing this.'"

Sure was. And sure did. On a crisp, clear day with very little sign of the gusts that have played havoc with the skiing program, Shiffrin dealt well with her pent-up emotions and put together a pair of aggressive, if not quite perfect, trips through the gates to win the giant slalom for the second Olympic gold medal of her precocious career.

No American Alpine skier has won more.

"Definitely, it's been a mental strain the last couple days, thinking we're going to race and then not racing. So to finally have the race actually happen today, I was like, 'Well, I really hope that I actually can do it when the time comes that we finally race.' And, yeah, I did," said Shiffrin, who is based in Colorado. "So now we get the ball rolling. I'm really excited for tomorrow."

As well she should be.

That's because Friday brings the slalom, by far Shiffrin's best event, one that she has dominated for five years, including a gold at the 2014 Sochi Games plus a trio of world titles. She is a huge favorite in that one, unlike the giant slalom, in which Shiffrin was merely a strong contender. After that, Shiffrin will skip Saturday's super-G, according to her mom, because there's no time to properly prepare. She still intends to enter the downhill and combined.

"I don't think it gets any easier, but I think she can take a deep breath and say, 'The pressure's off a little bit. Maybe,'" said her father, Jeff. "She'll just approach it the way she's always approached it: It's left-right-left-right-left-right, forget about the result."

In this instance, the result was a two-run time of 2 minutes, 20.02 seconds, good enough to beat surprise silver medalist Ragnhild Mowinckel of Norway by 0.39 seconds and Federica Brignone of Italy by 0.46. First-run leader Manuela Moelgg of Italy quickly gave away her 0.20-second advantage over Shiffrin and was eighth.

At Yongpung, Shiffrin found some problems in the choppy terrain of the second half of the 51-gate GS course, in part because nearby trees created shadows that made it tough to see.

But she wasn't the only one: Her first run was second-fastest; her other was fourth-fastest.

"She attacked both runs, and that's how we do it. It was the good way to do things," said France's Tessa Worley, the reigning world champion, who had a poor opening run and was seventh.

"She wanted this medal, and we could see it."

Said Brignone: "She is much stronger than the rest of us right now — not physically, but mentally, and with the way she works and prepares."

That last part is key to appreciating the way Shiffrin regrouped and performed in a race originally slated for Monday. Mostly terrific on the World Cup circuit this season — winning 10 of 23 races she's entered to lead the overall standings — she stumbled in late January and failed to finish three of her last four races.

After finishing, Shiffrin put her right glove on her chest, mouth agape. She paused and put her poles atop her neon helmet. She covered her ski goggles with both hands, taking the moment in.

Only briefly, though. There is more work to be done. And perhaps more medals to be won.

"It was my 15 seconds to let it all out," Shiffrin said, "and now I've got to focus on tomorrow."

SPORTS



Youth movement

Sixers' Simmons among young talent playing in Rising Stars » **NBA, Page 55**

WINTER OLYMPICS



The United States' Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates her women's giant slalom gold medal in Pyeongchang, South Korea, on Thursday.

MORRY GASH/AP

Just getting started

Precocious Shiffrin wins second gold of career

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

The nervous energy accumulated for Mikaela Shiffrin while she waited, waited, waited for these Olympics — the ones that so many are expecting to be *her* Olympics — to

finally get started. First one race was postponed. Then another.

And so it was not until a week into the Pyeongchang Games that Shiffrin and the other female Alpine skiers got to compete in the rescheduled giant slalom, an event the 22-year-old American considers a work in progress for her. In second place and still feeling some jitters

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WINTER GAMES 2018

TOP 10 MEDAL WINNERS

					TOTAL
1.	Norway	5	7	4	16
2.	Germany	8	2	4	14
3.	Canada	3	4	4	11
3.	Netherlands	5	4	2	11
5.	United States	5	1	2	8
6.	Japan	0	4	3	7
7.	France	3	1	2	6
8.	Olympic Athletes from Russia	0	1	4	5
8.	Sweden	3	2	0	5
10.	Austria	2	1	1	4

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